The Puranas

A compact, English-only version of
the Major 18 Puranas in one document

(overview of 18 Upa-Puranas,
and 28 additional Puranas - TBD)

Issue 1, Draft 1

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Introduction

At present, there is no single place where Dharmins ('Hindus') can go to download and read ALL their scriptures IN THEIR ENTIRETY. Numerous sites exist that provide portions of scriptures and/or commentary on scriptures, but no single website has thus far undertaken the immense task of posting all scriptures of Sanatana Dharma ("Hindu-ism").

There are three goals of this effort:

1) The short-term goal (3-5 years) of this project is to collect, organize, publish (online and in hardcopy) and disseminate knowledge of all Dharmic scriptures throughout the world.

2) The intermediate-term goal (5-7 years) of this project is to glean the best knowledge and wisdom from all these scriptures and from other sources (modern experience, ideas) into a single, unified holy book for Dharmins – The Dharma Veda. This book will act as a guide for Dharmins and as an index into all the supporting scriptures. Unlike the Bible and Quran of Christianity and Islam respectively, the Dharma Veda will NOT be a closed canon - frozen in time based upon mindless dogmas. It will be updated on a regular basis with the input of the Dharmasya (global Dharmic community). The essence of Dharma is Truth and Universal Law – it is NOT dogma or blind belief (as is the case with Matas such as Christianity and Islam). The term 'mata' means a belief, view or opinion and HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH DHARMA. Therefore, it is important to explain to non-Dharmins that Sanatana Dharma is based on the Truth and is therefore a much higher concept than a 'religion'. For the purposes of conversation, we can refer to Dharma as a religion, but it is then necessary for the Dharmin to educate the non-Dharmin as to the higher meaning and greater Truth of Dharma.

3) The long-term goal (7 years and beyond) of this project is to leverage the Dharma Veda to bring about a Global Dharmic Renaissance that will leave no nation untouched. The world needs a more robust, more sophisticated 'religion' to practice and the time for Sanatana Dharma has come. The 21st century may become the Dharmic Century after all!

Thank you,

Dharmic Scriptures Team

Sources:

1) Website: www.urday.com

1 Brahma Purana

This Purana contains 4 Chapters as follows.

1.1 Lord Brahma

This chapter contains 9 sections:

1.1.1 A Profile of Brahmaji

APPEARANCE OF BRAHMAJI

According to the scriptures, Brahmaji was born on the lotus that had arisen from the navel of eternal ommipresent Lord Narayan Vishnu. During the period of deluge (Pralaya) all the creations was destroyed and the creatures that had gone into Maharloka (the fourth of the upper worlds according to the Puranas), take birth again on the earth as per their deeds. God who keeps an account of the innumerable deeds of those inumerable creatures and arrange for their incarnations is called Brahma.

1.1.2 Scriptural Appearance of Brahmaji

Scriptures describe the appearance of Brahmaji thus:

> **CHATURMUKHD VEDADHARAH SAKSHASUTRA KAMANDALUH |**
> **HANSARUDHO RAKTAVASA BRAHMALOKA PITAMAH ||**

Meaning: He has four heads, holds Vedas, Rosary, Yagyopavita (Sacred thread) and Kamandalu (bowl); wears red cothes and rides a swan. He is none other than Brahmaji, grandfather of all of us.

1.1.3 Four Heads of Brahmaji

Brahmaji is shown with four heads, Besides being the creator of the universe, Brahmaji is a deponent of the deeds of all the creatures as well, alloting the creatures various incarnations as per their deed is duty of Brahmaji. Hence the full knowledge of a creatures deed is an indispensable precondition before deciding an incarnation for it. Only then full justice could be assured for a creature. Hence to look around in all the directions, Brahmaji is shown with the four heads.

1.1.4 White Beard of Brahmaji

Brahmaji is the great grandfather of all of us. Hence his appearance must match his status. Since antiquity, in a single day of Brahmaji no one knows how many members of creatures take birth and die. The period since antiquity can be calculated according to astrology. Since Brahmaji has such an eternal existance, his appearance must correspondend to his eternity as well, so that feeling of respect could naturally arise among the people for him. Hence, Lord Brahma is shown with a white beard.

1.1.5 Swan as a Vehicle

Swan is a white bird. God has bestowed it with unique virtues. Virtues that are not to be found in any creature of the eighty-four lakh incarnations, their virtue is NEERA-KSHEERA VIVEKA, that is, if milk is mixed with water, a swan is capable of separating milk from water and taking it rejecting the water. It is an indication fof Brahmaji that every creature deserves a full justice regarding his deeds , no matter how much entangled it might be. There should not be any ado in the justice. People must also learn from it that they should imbibe only the valuable part of a thing and discard the worthless. Only then they could be regarded as a doer of good deeds and thus receive honour in the society.

1.1.6 Purpose of Holding Vedas

Brahmaji is also shown as holding Vedas is one of his hands why? It is natural to be curious about it. Vedas are undoubtedly the most ancient scriptures in the word. Even the great deluge (Pralaya) could not destroy Vedas for almighty Brahma himself had taken incarnation to save Vedas during deluge. Hence Vedas have no beginning and no end. Besides Vedas also remind Brahmaji of the previous Kalpa (the grand period that includes all the four Yugas). Vedas also teach us that everything is destructible, only the truth can not be destroyed. Hence in the carnation of destructible body, never forget the indestructible, eternal, almighty Paramatma because every other thing in the world is bound to be destroyed one day.

1.1.7 Rosary in Second Hand

The great grandfather of all the creatures Lord Brahma teaches by his appearance that the human incarnation is not just for the mundane jobs. Instead among the mundane jobs, human being must keep on remembering the almighty Paramatma. Because without reciting the name of almighty God welfare of any human being is simply not possible. Hence, by the rosary in second hand Brahmaji teaches that, always keep on telling the name of almighty God, for your welfare. It is therefore written also -

JAPATA SIDDHIH JAPATASIDDHIH JAPATASIDHIH NASANSHAYAH

Meaning : One gets perfection only in the name of almighty God, there is no doubt in it. Hence, comprehensing these things human being must keep on reciting and telling the name of omnipresent God whether he is moving, or sitting, eating or drinking and sleeping or awakening.

1.1.8 Kamandalu (Coconut Shell Bowl)

JALAMEV JEEVANAM

That is water is life. Water is the basic physical element that caused the whole creation to exist. The coconut shell bowl (Kamandalu) held by Brahmaji; also holds water, thus depicting the hassle free existence and continuence of the whole creation.

1.1.9 Seat of the Lotus

Lotus is the seat for Lord Brahma Lotus also adorns the hand of Lord Vishnu and is an essential item to worship Lord Shiva. Every one knows that the lotus grows from the muck. Thus, it teaches that inspite of being born of the muck be as pure as possible. Including humans, all creatures are born out of the muck called passion and illusion. They are unable to free themselves from these two. Thus the lotus seat of Brahmaji teaches that regardless of origin one must strive to be as free and pure as possible from the influences of one's origin. In another words, humans must obtain themselves from the passion and illusion of the world despite being surrounded by them.

1.2 Goddess Sarasvati

This chapter contains 3 sections:

1.2.1 Appearance of Sarasvati

Literally, Saraswati means SARAH - Knowledge, STHANAMYASYAH ASTITI. Thus, Saraswati is the goddess who rules all kinds of knowledge without worshipping her no one can be a learned person. Hence followers of other religious also worship Saraswati, though the name and appearance may differ slightly. Appearance of Saraswati is thus described in the scriptures :

> SHUKLAM BRAMHAVICHARASA RA PARMADYAM
> JAGADVYAPINEEM
> VEENAPUSTAK DHARINIMABHAYADAM JADYANDHAKARA PAHAM |
> HASTE SPHATIKA MALIIKAM VIDADHI PADMASANE SAMSTHITAM |
> VANDE TAM PARAME SHVAREEM
> BHAGWATEEM BUDDHI PRADAY SHARDAM ||

Meaning : Wearer of the white clothes giver of the power to reflect the essence of Brahma, supreme power, holder of veena (Lyre), book, beaded rosarry, the benevolent Goddess is seated on a lotus. I respectfully pray the Goddess who gives us knowledge.

1.2.2 Significance of Book and Veena (Lyre)

Noted sage Bhartrihari writes that without literature and music, a man is not more than an animal. Hence the book and veena in the hands of Saraswati teach that if the humans wish to do away with their bruteness, knowledge of literature and music is must for them. Hence, Goddess Saraswati is shown with a book and Veena the symbols of literature and music respectively.

1.2.3 Beaded Rosary

The ultimate goal of knowledge is salvation. Salvation is possible only with unification with God. And rosary is a means for unification with God. But why a rosary of white beads only? It is so because white beads depict spotless purity. Thus it teaches us to rise above the blemishes of passion, anger, greed, ego, lust, envy, enimity etc. and make our mind as spotless as the beads. Similar

teaching are given by the the lotus seat and swan vehicle of the Goddess Saraswati.

1.3 Lord Vishnu

This chapter contains 11 sections:

1.3.1 Appearance of Lord Vishnu

Worship of Lord Vishnu is extremely essential for those who wish to receive the supreme salvation. A common rule of worship is that the worshipper must essentially have the virtues of the worshipped. Hence, Lord Vishnu gives his virtues through physical appearance.

1.3.2 Reflection of Scriptural Appearance

> **SHANTAKARAM BHUJANGASHAYANAM PADMANABHAM SURESHAM,**
> **VISHWADHARAM GAGAN SADRISHAM MEGHAVARNAM SHUBHANGAM|**
> **LAKSHMIKANTAN KAMALNAYANAM YOGIMIRDHYANA GAMYAM,**
> **VANDE VISHNUM BHAVA BHAYAHARAM SARVA LOKAIKNATHAM ||**

Meaning: I worship that Lord Vishnu who has a peaceful body (postures); who rests on Sheshanaga (the mighty serpant - cobra); who has a lotus in his navel, who is the base of the world, who is like the sky; who has a colour like cloud, who is the lord of Lakshmi (wealth); who has eyes like lotus; who is seen by yogis in their meditation; who is the remover of all the differences and who is the only Lord of all the three Lokas (Worlds), I worship such Lord Vishnu.

1.3.3 Scientific Depiction of Vishnu's Appearance

It is a common principle the worshipper should be a Deva (God) first and worship the God then, Let us reflect the appearance of Lord Vishnu in light of this principle. The first virtue of Lord Vishnu is his peaceful appearance. Hence his worshipper must also acquire peaceful appearance. This is also the need of the hour in the world that is presently full of conflicts, disputes, tensions and all that could pose a potential danger to the earth itself.

Despite having all kinds of wealth and luxuries people are devoid of peace. Hence, all the worshippers who want peace, must first reflect the peaceful appearance of Lord Vishnu.

1.3.4 Why does Lord Vishnu rest on Sheshanaga?

The second virtue (resting on the Sheshanaga) must be considered as the sub-virtue of the peaceful appearance. Scriptures describe Sheshanaga as Kala also. Sheshanaga is supposed to be a highly poisonous snake. But Lord Vishnu is resting on him without fear or worries. It teaches us not to lose patience even while facing the kala itself; instead one must strive to ride on it, only then can one remain in peaceful appearance. If the fear overpowers you, it may shatter

your peace. The worshippers who want salvation are being indicated to be peaceful in every circumstances.

1.3.5 Why is Lotus in the Navel?

The third virtue of Lord Vishnu is that he bears a lotus on his navel,hence he is also known as Padmanabham. From the lotus rises Lord Brahma. Brahma has only royal virtues (Rajoguna). Thus to remain in peaceful form Lord Vishnu has discarded all the royal virtues through his navel. Similarily he has made the snake, which has Tamoguna (virtue of darkness), his seat, Thus only Satoguna (Virtue of the truth) remains with him, and God became Shantakaram (acquired a peaceful form). Hence, if a worshipper wishes to be in peaceful form, he must first discard the virtues of royality and darkness.

1.3.6 Why does Vishnu stay in the Sea of Milk?

Before attempting to solve the problems, let us first give a thought to the oceans also. All the oceans, as we know are huge bodies of Saline water. How is then the sea of milk? A couplet of Chanakyaneeti explains it thus :

> KA CHINTA MAM JIVANE YADI HARIIVISHVAMMBHARO GEEYATE,
> NO CHEDARBHAKA JIVANAY JANANISTANYAM KATHM NIRMYET |
> ITYALOCHYMUHURMUHURYADUPATE LAKSHMIPATE KEWAL
> TVATPADAMSHUJASEVANEN SATATAM KALOMAYA NEEYATE ||

Meaning: If God Hari Vishnu is known as VISHVAMBHAR (feeder of the world) I need not worry for anything in the world. If he were not there, where the milk would come from in the breast of a mother before child's birth. So God filled the breast of a new mother with complete food that is milk.

It is clear from the above example that Lord Vishnu assumes different forms just to feed all the creatures in the world, of these different forms of the God, the milk is one. Acording to another principle of scriptures, God is present in every grain. Hence he is also present in the milk also. It is also the supreme duty of the humankind to maintain the original pure form of the milk, because the milk is prone to damage quickly. Similarily, all these desirious of Salvation, must follow Vaishnava religion, otherwise any deviation in it may damage all of their penance.

1.3.7 Reason for holding the Wheel

The famous Sudarshana Chakra (wheel) is whirling on the finger of Lord Vishnu. Through this wheel, God teaches the human kind that the cycle of the universe is whirling at his will. If anybody tries to go against his will (i.e. wheel) or gives up religion and begins to behave irreligiously, I will whirl him like the wheel or punish him with the wheel.

1.3.8 Reason for holding the Conch

White colour and sound are the main virtues of the conch. Through the colour of the conch, God Vishnu teaches us to follow the path of the truth. The sound is like a warning call that is if path of truth is not followed, the violater will be

challenged and punished. Thus. Either by fear of by any other thing, ome must follow the path of truth.

1.3.9 Purpose of Kaustubhamani

Kaustubha is the best jewel among all the gems. One who bears it, must be gentle, knowledgable, virtuous etc. Thus, bearing Kaustubha Mani, God preaches the common people that if they wish to develop all these virtues in them, they will have to move towards this gem once advanced, they will feel the eternal light in life and desired unification with God and ultimate salvation.

1.3.10 Why does Lord Vishnu hold a Mace?

Mace is a weapon that shows and dares for the physical strength. It was used by the fighters to demonstrate their strength. Among all the ancient weapons, mace was the main. It application is profusely seen in the epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata by physically powerful and strong characters like Hanumana & Bheema. Thus with the mace, God warns anti social elements that if they try to violate the sanctity of religion and torment his devotees, He will punish them. Tulsidas too writes about the reasons for incarnation of God.

> **JAB-JAB HOHI DHARAMA KI HANI...**
> **HARHINATH SAJJANA KAI PEERA |**

God takes various incarnations to protect his devotees.

1.3.11 Why is Garuda (Eagle) the Vehicle of Vishnu?

Garuda (eagle) is said to be the king of the birds. It is the fearest of bird. Thus God is assuring his devotees to be fearless, because if any calamity befell them, he will reach them in no time.

1.4 Goddess Laxmi

This chapter contains 3 sections:

1.4.1 Why Goddess Laxmi presses the feet of God?

Goddess Lakshmi presents an example of an ideal spouse before the world.The supreme duty of a woman is described in the service of her husband. Second aspect of the message is for the people who want to get rich, that if they want the wealth, they must develop a devotion for the feet of Narayana, for Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth) is to be found there and no where else.

1.4.2 Reason for Liquidity of Laxmi

The better half of Lord Vishnu can never be freakish, because Satoguna is the main virtue of Lord Vishnu. In the proxmity of God whose main virtue is Satoguna, no one can remain freakish. But the material wealth, that is Gold, and silver, have mobility as their main virtue. Thus the rich people who have these wealths may be freakish, but not Lakshmi the beloved of God Vishnu.

1.4.3 Why is the owl the vehicle of Laxmi?

Owl is the vehicle of goddess Lakshmi. An owl can't see in the day, Hence, Lakshmi visits the house of those devotees who only worship her, on her vehicle owl. And she visits the home of those devotees who worship Lord Vishnu first and then her, with Vishnu riding his vehicle Garuda.

It also implies that at places where black-money is main, Lakshmi rides an owl. Such a wealth can't be put in the service of nation, people religion etc, or in any worthy task, instead it is squandered in abhorant deeds. Since owl is a bird that sees in the darkness alone, and darkness sumbolizes ignorance. Because of ignorance, money is generated in wrong ways and spent in wrong deeds. Thus owl is a symbol of black money and misdeeds.

2 Padma Purana

This Purana contains 5 Chapters as follows:

Second among the eighteen Puranas, Padma Purana contains five parts- Srishtikhand, Bhumikhand, Swargkhand, Patalkhand and Uttarkhand.

1) **Srishtikhand** contains an explanation of metaphysical knowledge in a dialogue style between Bheeshma and the sage Pulastya. It contains a description of Pushkar Tirth. Surprisingly, this part ridicules the worship of the planets (Grahas).

2) **Bhumikhand** has a description of the earth, besides the tales of the kings like Prithu, Nahush, Yayati, Prabhriti and the sages like Shiva Varma, suvrata and Chyvan. For its description of the earth and archaic matter, this part is often regarded as the geography and the history of a period.

3) **Swargakhand** describes the sequence of creation first and then the glory of the holy places as well as the geographical expansion of India along with her mountains, rivers and the people.

4) **Patalkhand** - Sutaji narrates the tales related to the life and plays of Lord Rama in an assembly of the sages. This part also contains a description about the life and plays of Lord Krishna.

5) **Uttarkhand** contains a discussion about the metaphysical knowledge of religion presented in a dialogue style between Lord Shiva and Parvati. This part also contains thousand names of Lord Vishnu and one hundred names of Lord Rama.

2.1 Shrishtikhand

This chapter contains 16 sections.

Having revealed the contents of all the Puranas to his son Ugrashrava, Sage Lomaharshan instructed him to go to 'Naimisharanya' and spread it among the sages doing penance over there.

There is an interesting tale how this sacrosanct forest of Naimish derived it's name –

Once, the sages sought Lord Vishnu's help in finding a suitable place, where they could perform their religious activities unhindered. Lord Vishnu released his chakra and instructed them to follow it. 'This chakra had many circumferences (Nemi) and all of you can commence your penance at the place where one of them gets detached from the chakra' —said Lord Vishnu.

The Sages followed the chakra as per the instruction of Lord Vishnu. Once of the circumferences of chakra got detached and fell at a place called Gangavarta. In course of time this particular place was famous as 'Naimish' because the term 'Nemi' in Sanskrit means circumference. When Ugrashrava who was popularly known as 'Sutji' reached 'Naimisharnya' all the sages received him with enlighten all the sages on the divine tales of Padma Puran.

Sutji replied— Padma Puran consists of five sections and fifty-five thousand shlokas. The names of these sections are Shrishti-Khand, Bhumi-Khand, Swarg Khand, Patal Khand and Uttam-Khand. The tales of Padma-Puran praise the glory of Lord Vishnu. These tales were narrated to Lord Brahma by Lord Vishnu himself, who in turn propagated them in this world through various sages.

2.1.1 The Beginning of Creation

The Sages requested Sutji to narrate about the incident when sage Pulastya had met Bhishma. Sutji replied— Bhishma was doing penance at a place called Gangadwar. Being pleased by his austere penance, Lord Brahma instructed Pulastya to go to Gangadwar and bless Bhishma.

After reaching there, Pulastya told Bhishma that Lord Brahma was pleased by his penance. 'Ask any boon you wish for' said Pulastya. Bhishma thanked his good fortune of getting a chance to meet Sage Pulastya. He requested Pulastya to reveal how Lord Brahma had created the world.

Pulastya replied— During the initial phase of his creation, Lord Brahma created the Mahattatva first of all. After that he created the three types of Ego from the Mahattatva—Satva, Rajas and Tamas. These three types of Ego are the origins of all the five sense-organs, organs of action and all the five basic elements– space, water, fire, air & earth.

An enormous egg came into existence with the permutation and combination of these five basic elements. Within this egg exists the whole universe including the mountains, islands, oceans, planets, deities, demons and the human beings. The layers of water, fire, air, space and darkness envelop this enormous egg. These elements are once again covered by the 'Mahattatva', which in turn is enveloped by the 'Prakriti' (nature). Lord Vishnu himself does creation in the form of Lord Brahma and also takes various incarnations to protect the mankind. At the end of the Kalpa, it is only He, who annihilates in the form of Rudra. After the end of Kalpa, he takes rest on the back of Sheshnag for the full period of deluge.

2.1.2 Lord Brahma’s Life-Span and the Chronological Order of the ‘Eras’

Pulastya says—Lord Brahma, the embodiment of Lord Vishnu has a life-span of one hundred years. His life-span is also called 'Par', and half of its period is known as 'Parardha'. One 'Kashtha' consists of 15 Nimesha while a Kala consists of 30 'Kashthas'. A muhurta consists of 30 Kalas. The periods of 30 muhurtas are equal to one day and Night of the human beings. A month of this

world is equivalent to 30 days and nights. Six months make an 'Ayan' and a year consists of two 'Ayans'. These two 'Ayans' are also known by two other names—Dakshinayan and Uttarayan. Dakshinayan is the night of the deities where as Uttarayan is their day.

Four yugas are equivalent to twelve thousand years of the deities, which occur in a cyclic order—Satya, Treta, Dwapar and Kaliyuga. The periods of these yugas are as follows—
Satya Yuga = 4000 years
Treta Yuga = 3000 years
Dwapar Yuga = 2000 years
Kali Yuga = 1000 years
Total = 10,000 years
Each yuga is followed by the hibernation periods of 'Sandhya' and Sandhyansh, which are as follows– Sandhya Sandhyansh

- Satya Yuga 400 400
- Treta Yuga 300 300
- Dwapar Yuga 200 200
- Kali Yuga 100 100
  Total 1000 years 1000 years

Four Yuga are collectively known as 'Chaturyuga'. A Brahma's day consists of one-thousand such 'Chaturyugas'. Altogether, fourteen Manu appear during this whole period of 1000 Chaturgas or in other words a day of Lord Brahma. Each 'Manvantar' is named after a Manu and is equivalent to little more than 71 Chaturyugas. It also has its own Indra, Saptarishis and other deities. This way, a manvantar is also equivalent to 8,52,000 years of the deities or divine years. Going by the standard of the years of this world a manvantar is equivalent to 30,67,20,000 years. On the basis of the years of this world, a Brahma's day is equivalent to 30,67,20,000 x 14 = 4,29,40,80,000 yrs. This is the period after which a Brahma's day is over and a deluge takes place when all the three worlds becomes devoid of life due to unbearable heat. Lord Brahma then takes rest for the same period (4,29,40,80,000 yrs) which is his night.

After the night is over, Lord Brahma again commences his creation. So, this process continues for the whole period of Brahma's life span, i.e. 100 yrs." Bheeshma requested Sage Pulastya to describe how Lord Brahma created life in the beginning of the present Kalpa.

Pulastya replied— At the end of the previous kalpa when Lord Brahma awakened from his sleep, he found the whole earth submerged in water. He meditated on Lord Vishnu, who took the incarnation of 'Varah' and retrieved the earth and established it in its original position. Lord Brahma then created all the four worlds–Bhurloka, Bhuvarloka, Swargloka and Maharloka and divided the earth into seven islands.

First of all, Lord Brahma created the 'Mahattatva'. After that he created the 'Tanmatras', Indriyas (sense-organs), the immovable things like mountains, rivers, animals, deities, demons, human beings etc.

2.1.3 The Four Prominent Castes

On being asked by Bhishma about the origin of the four prominent castes, Sage Pulastya said— Lord Brahma created the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas from his mouth and chest respectively. Similarly, Vaishyas and Shudras manifested from Lord Brahma's thigh and feet respectively.Lord Brahma had created his 'manasputras' with the objective of increasing the population and their names were Bhrigu, Pulah, Kratu, Angira, Marichi, Daksha, Atri and Vashishth. But all of them were free from worldly desires and extremely virtuous. Seeing his effort go in vain, Lord Brahma became furious, as a result of which Rudra manifested from his forehead. Half of Rudra's body resembled like a male while the remaining half appeared like a female.Lord Brahma instructed Rudra to detach the female form from his body and commence copulative creation. Following his advice, Rudra detached the female part of his body and created eleven male entities. Similarly he created various female entities from the female part of his body.

This way, the first human pair-Manu and Shatarupa came into existence. In course of time four children were born to them—Priyavrata, Uttanpad, Prasuti and Aakuti. Prasuti was married to Daksha Prajpati, while Aakuti became the wife of Ruchi-Prajapati. Prasuti gave birth to 24 daughters– Shraddha, Laxmi, Dhriti, Pushti, Tushti, Medha, Kriya, Buddhi, Lajja, Vapu, Shanti, Keerti, Khyati, Sati, Sambhuti, Smriti, Preeti, Kshama, Santati, Ansuya,Urja, Swaha and Swadha. Out of them, the former thirteen were the wives of Dharma and the rest were married to various sages like Bhrigu, Shiv, Marichi, Angira, myself (Pulastya), Pulaha, Kratu, Atri, Vashishth Agni, etc.Shraddha gave birth to 'Kaam', Laxmi to 'Daarpa, Dhriti to Niyam, Tushti to Santosh, Pushti to Lobha, Medha to Shrut, Kriya to Dand, Nay and Vinay, Buddhi to Bodh, Lajja to Vinay, Vapu to Vyavasay, Shanti to Kshama, Siddhi to Sukh and Keerti gave birth to Yash. All of them were the sons of Dharma.

Kaam had a son named Harsh from his wife Nandi, Bhrigu's wife Khyati gave birth to a daughter named Laxmi–the consort of Lord Vishnu. Lord Rudra accepted Sati–the daughter of Daksha Prajapati as his wife. Hinsa was the wife of Adharm and gave birth to Anrit and Nikriti. Anrit had two sons—Maya and Narak, while Nikriti had two daughters–Maaya and Vedana. Maaya married Maya while Vedana became the wife of Narak. Maaya had a son named Mrityu–the lord of death and Vedana gave birth to Dukh. Five children were born to Mrityu–Vyadhi, Jara, Shok, Trishna and Krodha. All of them were celibates and had no progeny.

2.1.4 The Manifestations of Goddess Laxmi

Bheeshma expressed his desire to know about the manifestation of goddess Laxmi.

Pulastya replied– Once, after being defeated by the demons, the deities went to Lord Vishnu and sought his help. Lord Vishnu instructed them to collect all the medicinal herbs, and put them in the Ksheersagar, so that after the churning of the ocean ambrosia could be retrieved.Lord Vishnu also advised them to use the Mandar mountain as a Churner and the serpent–Sheshnag as a rope for churning the ocean.The deities then reached an agreement with the demons according to which both the groups were supposed to unitedly churn the ocean. The great Mandar mountain was uprooted and placed on the back of the tortoise–the embodiment of Lord Vishnu. Sheshnag coiled around that mountain and both the ends were held by the demons and the deities respectively. The deities intelligently chose the tail-end, while the demons in their foolishness chose the mouth-end. The vemon spilled by Sheshnag destroyed the power and strength off the demons. When the process of Churning began, the first thing to emerge from the sea-bed was Kaamdhenu– the holy cow. The deities claimed the ownership of this divine cow. Subsequently, Vaaruni (intoxicating drink) emerged from the sea-bed, which was claimed by the ignorant demons. During the process of ocean-churning, various kinds of things emerged out from the ocean–Parijat, sixty crore apsaras, the moon and the Kaalkut (poison), which were distributed among the demons and the deities. Lord Mahadev drank the Kaalkut when he saw that there was no taker for it.

The churning of ocean also resulted into the manifestation of ambrosia-pot, Uchchaishrava (horse) and Eravat (elephant). Ultimately, goddess Laxmi manifested herself, seated on a lotus. The deities eulogised her by chanting the mantras of Sri Sukta. The deities were desirous of having goddess Laxmi on their side, so were the demons, but Lord Brahma instructed Vishnu to accept her as his consort. The demons became furious and snatched the ambrosia-pot from the hands of Sage Dhanvantari. Lord Vishnu then disguised himself as the most enchanting woman and fooled the demons into giving back the ambrosia-pot. Lord Vishnu gave the pot to the deities who became immortal after drinking ambrosia. A tremendous battle was fought between the demons and the deities. But, the demons were defeated in this battle and fled to the netherworld to protect their lives. The deities eulogised Lord Vishnu and returned to heaven.

2.1.5 Sati gives up her Life

On being enquired by Bheeshma about the reason why Sati gave up her life, Sage Pulastya narrated the following tale —

Once, Daksha Prajapati had organised a grand yagya in which he had invited everybody except Lord Shiva. This Yagya was presided over by four prominent sages—Vashishth, Angika, Vrihaspati and Narad. Sati went to attend the yagya

despite Lord Shiva's reluctance to send her. After reaching there she asked Daksha about the reason why he had not invited Lord Shiva.

Daksha said—"Your husband is unworthy of being in the company of other deities, because of his abhorrent appearance. He smears ashes on his body and wanders through the cremation grounds. In the name of clothes, your husband puts on tiger's skin. A garland of skulls keep on hanging down his neck. All species of serpents coil around his body. Do you think he is eligible to sit in the company of the deities? Your husband had brought great shame on me and this is the reason why I did not invite him."

Sati could no more listen to her husband's criticism and gave up her life by jumping into the oblation-fire.When the news of Sati's death reached Lord Shiva, he became extremely furious and sent his ganas to avenge her death. The Ganas went and created havoc at the oblation-site.After the death of Sati, Lord Shiva became a recluse and lost all interest in his life. His mind was preoccupied by nothing else but the thoughts of her beloved.One day, Sage Narad informed Lord Shiva about Sati's rebirth as the daughter of Himvan and Mena. Lord Shiva became extremely pleased by this good news. Eventually, he reunited with her eternal consort Parvati.

2.1.6 The Origin of Deities, Demons and Serpents

Bheeshma requested Sage Pulastya to explain how different entities like the deities, demons and serpents came into being.

Pulastya replied—Having failed in his repeated attempts of increasing population by the means of 'sankalpa' Daksha Prajapati was left with no option but to take the help of copulative creation. He begot sixty daughters from his wife named Virini. In course of time ten of them were married to Dharma whose names were—Arundhati, Vasu, Jami, Lamba, Bhanu, Marutvati, Sankalpa, Muhurta, Saadhya and Vishwa.Vishwa gave birth to Vishwadeva, while Saadhyaa was the mother of Saddhya. Marutvati gave birth to Marutvan. Vasu had eight sons who became famous as the Vasus—yourself (Bheeshma), Dhruv, Soma, Dhar, Anil, Anal, Pratyush and Prabhas. Bhanu had a son by the same name i.e. Bhanu. Mahurta begot deities, who were the lords of auspicious moments. Lamba gave birth to Ghosh while Jami had a daughter named Nagvithi. Arundhati became the mother of all the creatures of this world. As far as the offspring of eight Vasus are concerned, 'you' (Bheeshma) have four sons–Shant, Vaitand, Samb and Munibabhru. Dhruv had a son named Kaal. While Soma was the father of Varcha. Dhar had two sons–Dravin and Havyavaah. Anil had three sons— Pran, Raman and Shishir. Anal also had three sons—Shakh, Upshakh and Naigameya. Pratyush had a son named Deval, who later on became a famous sage. Prabhas was the father of Prajapati Vishwakarma–the architect of the deities.

The names of the eleven Rudras are—Ajaikpad, Ahirbudhnya, Virupaksh, Raivat, Har, Bahuroop, Trayambak, Savitra, Jayant, Pinaki and Aparajit. All of them are

said to be the lords of the Ganas and have all together 84 crore progenies known as the Rudraganas.

Sage Kashyap had thirteen wives—Aditi, Diti, Danu, Arishta, Sursa, Surabhi, Vinta, Tamra, Krodhvasha, Ira, Kadru, Khasa and Muni. Kashyap had two sons from Diti—Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. Hiranyakashipu had four sons—Prahlad, Anuhlad, Sanhlad and Hlad. Prahlad also had four sons—One of them was Virochan. Virochan was the father of Bali. Vanasur, who had one thousand arms, was the eldest son of Bali.Hiranyaksha had four sons, who themselves had 27 crore sons and grandsons in all. Kashyap had begotten one hundred sons from Danu, among whom Viprachitti was the most powerful.Viprachitti had fourteen sons from Sinhika—Sainhikeya (Rahu), Kansa, Shankh, Nala, Vatapi, Ilwal, Namuchi, Khasrima, Anjan, Narak, Kaalnaabh, Parmanu, Kalpavirya and Dhanuvanshavivardhan.
Kashyap also had six daughters from Tamra–Shuki, Shyeni, Bhasi, Gridhi, Sugridhi and Shuchi. All six of them gave birth to various species of birds. Shuki was the mother of Parrots and Owls. Shyeni gave birth to hawks while Bhasi was the mother of ospreys (a large fish eating birds.) Gridhi gave birth to Vultures and Sugridhi was the mother of pigeons. Shuchi was the mother of cranes, Swans and other similar aquatic birds. Vinita was the mother of Garuda and Arun—Supreme among birds. Arun was the father of Sampati and Jatayu.Sursa was the mother of the serpents and had given birth to one thousand snakes. Similarly, Kadru gave birth to one thousand cobras.Surabhi, one of the thirteen wives of Kashyap had given birth to cows, buffaloes as well as beautiful women. Muni was the mother of the celestial damsels –apsaras. Arishta gave birth to Kinnars and Gandharvas. Ira was the mother of various vegetation like grass, trees, creepers and bushes.

Khasa gave birth to crore of Rakshashas (monsters) and Yakshas.Kashyap had also begotten forty-nine Marudganas from Diti.

2.1.7 The Origin of Marudganas

Bheeshma requested Sage Pulastya to describe how all the Marudganas came into existence.

Pulastya replied— All the sons and grandsons of Diti had perished in the battle fought between the deities and demons. Diti—the mother of daityas (demons) wanted to take revenge, so she started doing a penance at the bank of river Saraswati, which lasted for 100 years.Being pleased by her austere penance Sage Kashyap arrived and expressed his desire to bless her with a boon. Diti wanted a mighty son who could kill Indra. Sage Kashyap then implanted his sperms in Diti's womb and instructed her to remain there (where she had been doing penance) for 100 years. He also instructed her on various do's and don'ts which a pregnant woman is expected to observe. Diti agreed to follow his instructions.Mean while, Indra got wind of her pregnancy and became scared. He wanted to destroy the foetus at any cost, so he arrived at the place where Diti was staying. He had disguised himself to avoid being recognized by Diti. He

engaged himself in her servitude, waiting for an opportune moment to destroy the foetus.

This way, ninety-nine years had passed and only three days were remaining after which Diti was expected to give birth to a son. As the inevitable day approached nearer, Indra started becoming restless.One day, Diti was very tired and fell down asleep. Her hair was untied and her head had stooped down while she was sleeping, just opposite to the instructions Kashyap had given to her. Finding the moment opportune, Indra entered into Diti's womb and cut the foetus into seven pieces with his Vajra. The seven fragments of foetus instantaneously got transformed into seven infants and started wailing. Indra became furious and once again he attacked them with his vajra and severed them into seven pieces each. But to Indra's sheer amazement, there were 49 infants, all wailing loudly. He tried to stop them from crying by shouting 'Marud' (don't cry), but to no avail.

Indra realized that the infants had attained immortality on account of the 'Pournamasi Vrata', which Diti had devoutly observed during the course of her penance. Indra named the infants as Marudganas and blessed them. He then begged for Diti's forgiveness and took her along with the Marudganas to heaven. The Marudganas, despite being born in the clans of demons, never associated with them and hence were revered even by the deities.Bheeshma expressed his curiosity to know about the detailed description of all the fourteen manvantars. Pulastya said–The first manvantar was called Swayambhuva, named after Swayambhuva- Manu. Yamya was the prominent deity of this manvantar. Marichi and other six prominent sages were the Saptarishis of this manvantar. Swayambhuva- Manu had ten sons—Aaghnigha, Agnibahu, Vibhu, Savan, Jyotishman, Dyutiman, Havya, Medha, Medhatithi and Vasu.

The second manvantar was named after Swarochish–Manu. Swarochish–Manu had four sons–Nabh, Nabhasya, Prasriti and Bhavan. Tushit was the prominent deity of this second manvantar. Dattatreya, Atri, Chyavan, Stanba, Pran, Kashyap and Vrihaspati were the saptarishis of this manvantar.

The third manvantar was called Autam and derived its name from Autami Manu, who had ten sons–Isha, Urj, Tanuj, Shuchi, Shukra, Madhu, Madhav, Nabhasya, Nabh and Saha, Bhanusangyak was the prominent deity of this manvantar. Sage Urj and other six sages were the saptarishis then.

The fourth manvantar was called Taamas–named after Taamas-manu, who also had ten sons like his predecessor. The names of his sons were–Akalmash, Tapodhanva, Tapomool, Tapodhan, Taporashi, Tapasya, Sutapasya, Parantap, Tapobhagi and Tapoyogi. Kavi, Prithu, Agni, Akapi, Kapi, Janya and Dhama were the Saptarishis of this manvantar, while Saadhyagana was the prominent deity.

The fifth manvantar was called Raivat–named after Raivat Manu, who had ten sons as well–Varun, Tatvadarshi, chitiman, Havyap, Kavi, Mukt, Nirutsuk, Satva,

Vimoh and Prakashak, Bhutrajaa and Prakriti were the two prominent deities of this manvantar and the names of the saptarishis were–Devabahu, Subahu, Parjanya, Somap, Muni, Hiranyaroma and Saptashva.

Next arrived the sixth manvantar—Chakshush. This Manvantar derived its name from Chakshush–Manu, who had ten sons and among whom Ruru was the most prominent one. Lekh, Ribhu, Prithagbhoot, Varimool and Divau were the prominent deities of this manvantar. The names of Saptarishis were–Bhrigu, Sudhama, Viraj, Vishnu, Narad, Vivaswan and Abhimani.

The present manvantar, which is the seventh in order, is called Vaivaswat. The Saptarishis of this manvantar are—Atri, Vashishth, Kashyap, Gautam–yogi, Bhardwaj, Vishwamitra and Jamdagni.

The eighth manvantar will be called Savarnya and will be named after Savarni Manu, Savarni Manu will have ten sons—Dhriti, Variyan, Yavasu, Suvarna, Dhrishti, Charishnu, Aadya, Sumati, Vasu and Shukra. The Saptarishis of this manvantar will be–Ashwatthama, Rishyashringa, Kaushikya, Galav, Shatanand, Kaashyap and Parashuram.

The nineth manvantar will be named after Ruchi–Manu and will be called Rauchya manvantar. Ruchi–manu will have a son named Rauchya.

The tenth manvantar will be called Bhautya and will derive its name from Bhautya Manu–Son of Bhuti.

The eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth manvantars will be named after Merusavarni, Ribhu, Veetdhama and Vishkvasen Manus respectively.

All these fourteen Manus successively rule this world for the total period of 1000 Chaturyugas. At the end of Kalpa each of them unite with Lord Brahma.

2.1.8 King Prithu and the Surya Dynasty

Bheeshma enquired Sage Pulastya about the mighty King Prithu upon whom the earth was named as Prithvi.

Sage Pulastya replied—Anga-Prajapati was the descendant of Swayambhuva Manu and Sunitha was his wife. In course of time, Sunitha gave birth to a son, who was named Ven. After growing up, Ven turned out to be an extremely irreligious person and used to spend his time committing all sorts of immoral deeds. The sages tried to bring him to the virtuous path but to no avail. They became furious and cursed Ven as the result of which he died. The sages then churned his dead body, which resulted into the manifestation of a mean caste called Mlechchha. They kept on churning his body and in the process, an extremely virtuous entity manifested from the right hand of Ven. He held various weapons like mace, bow and arrows in his hands. He was none other than Prithu–the embodiment of Lord Vishnu.

After being crowned as a king, Prithu was saddened to see the prevalence of immorality throughout the length and breadth of earth. The lack of virtuosity and religiousness among the inhabitants of earth made him extremely furious. He decided to destroy the earth. The earth became scared and fled in the guise of a cow. Prithu chased her wherever she went. At last, the cow halted at a place as she had got tired. To save her life, the cow agreed to fulfill all the desires of Prithu. Prithu then milked the cow, which later on got transformed into cereals. Similarly all the deities, ancestors and other human-beings milked the cow and received numerous invaluable things.

Prithu was a just king. Peace and prosperity prevailed during his reign. People were religious and free from any kind of sorrow. The earth is named after him as Prithvi.Sage Pulastya then went on to give a detailed description of Surya dynasty—Vivaswan (Surya) had three queens—Sangya, Ragyi and Prabha. Ragyi had a son named Raivat while Somgya was the mother of Vaivaswat–Manu, Yama and Yamuna. Once, Sangya being unable to bear the extreme radiance of Surya created a superficial entity from her body and instructed her to act as Surya's wife in her absence. The name of this superficial woman was chhaya, who had two sons and two daughters from Surya. The names of her sons were Saavarna–Manu and Shanaishchar, while the names of her daughters were Tapti and Vishti.

Shanaishchar became immortal as a planet while Yamuna and Tapti became rivers. Vaivaswat Manu had ten sons among whom 'Ila' was the eldest. After appointing Ila as his successor, Vaivaswat, manu went to do penance.Once, Ila transformed into a woman after tresspassing a forest where Lord Shiva and Parvati were enjoying privacy. It was Lord Shiva's curse that any male who ventured in to that forbidden forest would become a woman. Later on, Buddh became enchanted by Ila's beauty and married her.
Meanwhile, when Ila did not return to his kingdom, his brother Ikshvaku went in search of him. Ikshvaku reached the outskirts of the same forest but did not enter it. He managed to please Shiva by his devotion. When Lord Shiva appeared, Ikshvaku requested him to make Ila a man once again. Shiva told him that it was impossible but assured him by saying "If you perform an Ashwamedha yagya and donate all the virtue thus acquired to me, then your brother will be able to live as a man for one month. But, after one month he will again become a woman. Thus, his form will keep on changing every alternate months."

Meanwhile Ila gave birth to four sons among whom Utkal, Gaya and Haritashwa were prominent. This way, Ila became the source from which the lineage of chandra sprouted.Ikshvaku ruled over Madhya-desh. He had one hundred sons, all of whom ruled the territories situated north of Meru Mountain. Ikshvaku also had one hundred and fourteen more sons, who ruled over the areas situated south of Meru.Kakusttha was Ikshvaku's grand-son. Kakusttha had a son named Suyodhan. Some other prominent kings coming from this lineage were–

Prithu, Vrihadashwa, Kuwalashva, Purukutsu, Dharmasetu, Muchukund, Tridhanva, Traidharun, Satyavrat and Satyarath.

The most truthful king Harishchandra was Satyarath's son and Rohit was his son. Famous kings like Raghu, Dilip Aja, Dirghabahu and Prajapati-Dasharath were the descendants of Ikshvaku. Dasharath had four sons among whom Sri Ram was the eldest and who had killed the demon king Ravana. Ram had two sons–Lav and Kush.

2.1.9 Bashkali, the Demon king

Bheeshma requested Sage Pulastya to reveal Why Lord Vishnu had to take incarnation as Vaman. Sage Pulastya replied— Once, during Satyayuga, the demons had defeated the deities and driven them out from their abode–heaven. The mighty demon, Bashkali was their leader. He had become immortal an account of a boon received from Lord Brahma. Indra went to Lord Brahma and narrated the aweful tale of the deities. Lord Brahma assured him that Lord Vishnu would certainly help in this matter. Lord Brahma contemplated on Lord Vishnu who appeared in a very short time.

When, Lord Vishnu came to know about the deities's pitiable condition, he promised them that very soon Bashkali's wings would be clipped.

Lord Vishnu said—"Very soon, I will take incarnation as Vaman. Indra will have to come along with me and demand a piece of land measured by my three steps. I shall then reveal my giant form and send him to the patalloka after making him bereft of his kingdom. In course of time Lord Vishnu manifested as Vaman from Aditi's womb. His manifestation was simultaneously marked by various auspicious signs–the air became full of fragrance, the deities started rejoicing, the trees started shedding flowers on their own and all the desires of living beings were fulfilled.
Lord Vaman then went to Bashkali's palace accompanied by Indra. Both of them marvelled at the grandness of Bashkali's city, which was surrounded by a high boundary-wall.Bashkali was a very virtuous and benevolent king. He was truthful and well versed in all the scripture. His subject lived in prosperity and enjoyed a long life.When the demons saw Indra coming with a dwarf they informed Bashkali. Bashkali instructed the demons to bring both the guests with due respect.

Bashkali treated his guests with all honour and asked Indra about the reason for his sudden arrival. Indra praised Bashkali's benevolence and said—"The short brahmin accompanying me is desirous of a piece of land measured by his three steps." Bashkali was amused at this ridiculous demand and requested Vaman to ask for anything he wished. But, Vaman wanted nothing more than a small piece of land measured by his three steps.

Shukracharya-Bashkali's guru smelled something fishy and warned him, but he was not to listen. Bashkali then requested Vaman to go ahead and measure the

land by his three steps.Suddenly, Lord Vaman transformed his physique into a giant size. His first step reached the Surya-loka and his second step touched the dhruva-loka. He hit the top of the universe with his third step as a result of which water poured down. The water got collected and came to be known as Vaishnavi river. But, the land had still not been measured and hence Lord Vaman reminded Bashkali of his vow and ultimately the helpless Bashkali surrendered to the will of Lord Vaman and sought his refuge. Lord Vaman blessed him and sent him to Patalloka.

2.1.10 Sri Ram kills Shambuk

After killing the demons king Ravan, Sri Ram returned to Ayodhya. Many sages had arrived there to bless him on the occasion of his crowning ceremony. Sage Vashishth was one of them.As Sri Ram was conversing with the sages a brahmin arrived there with the corpse of his son and wailed—"O son! Your death is certainly due to some flaw of Sri Ram. Now, your mother and I have decided to give up our lives as there is no point in living."

Sri Ram's heart was filled with grief and he asked Sage Vashishth as to how the brahmin could be helped. Sage Vashishth revealed to Sri Ram that the brahmin's son had died a premature death because of Shambuk. Vashishth said–"Shambuk is a Shudra by birth, but he is doing an austere penance. Shudras are not entitled to do penance in all the three yugas, except the Kaliyug. So, only his death can bring back the brahmin's son alive."

Sri Ram instructed both his younger brothers–Laxman and Bharat, to look after the state's affairs in his absence and went in search of Shambuk boarded on his Pushpak Viman.Sri Ram saw a man doing penance at the shore of a reservoir. He landed his Pushpak Viman and went near that man. He introduced himself and enquired about the man's identity–Sri Ram asked–Why are you doing such an austere penance. Who are you?

Without moving the man replied that he was a shudra named Shambuk. He said— I am desirous of attaining to devaloka and hence I am doing this penance.Sri Ram took out his sword and severed Shambuk's head. All the deities hailed Sri Ram and the brahmin's child became alive once again.

2.1.11 Manifestation of Ganesh & Kartikeya

Once, before taking her bath, goddess Parvati anointed unguent on her body and while removing it created a human form from the accumulated dross. The head of this human form resembled an elephant. Parvati then playfully immersed the human-form into river Ganga. But, to her sheer amazement the human form became alive and of enormous size. She accepted him as her son and he was none other than elephant-headed deity-Ganesh.

Once, Lord Shiva became so deeply fascinated by her consort. Parvati hat he did not come out from his palace for 1000 years. The deities became worried and sent Agni to find out the reason. Agni disguised himself as a parrot and entered

the palace where Shiva was enjoying privacy with Parvati.

Meanwhile, Parvati went at the bank of a reservoir to quench her thirst. After reaching there she saw six divine women (matrikas) carrying water in the leaves of lotus flowers. As Parvati was thirsty, she requested them to give some water. The matrikas agreed on the condition that a son born to her (Parvati) should also have to be accepted as their son. Parvati gave her conscent. The matrikas gave Parvati water to drink.

Hardly had Parvati finished drinking water than a divine child emerged out from her womb. The child possessed various weapons like, trident, shakti and a noose in his hands. He was none other than Kartikeya.The deities appointed Kartikeya as the commander of their army. During that time, a mighty demon named Tarakasur used to torment the deities. Kartikeya killed that demon on the request of deities.

2.1.12 An Ideal Brahmin and the Significance of the Gayatri Mantra

Describing about the qualities of an ideal brahmin, Sage Pulastya said— Once, Narad had asked Lord Brahma as to who was worthy of receiving Vishnu's blessings. Lord Brahma had told Narad that Lord Vishnu showered his blessings on those who engaged themselves in the service of brahmins. A brahmin should be virtuous and well versed in all the scriptures. A brahmin who does not observe the rituals as mentioned in the Vedas, brings disgrace to his ancestors. An ideal brahmin is respectful towards his parents, teachers and treats his guests with due honour. He never aspires for women other than his wife and chants the sacred Gayatri mantra everyday.

Goddess Gayatri is said to have manifested in the lineage of Sankhyayan. She is of fair complexion and fire is the symbolical expression of her mouth. Lord Brahma dwells on her forehead, Lord Vishnu in her heart and Lord Rudra has his abode in her braided hair. The Gayatri mantra consists of 24 letters and each of them is related with a specific deity. There is a mention of Gayatri mantra, which consists of 18 letters. It begins with the word 'agni' and ends with 'swaha'.

The mantra is as follows—OM AGNERVAKPUNSI YAJURDEDIN JUSHTA SOMAM PIBA SWAHA.

A person, who chants the mantra for 100 times, becomes liberated from gravest of sin. The various deities related with the twenty-four letters of Gayatri Mantra are as under-

Deity

- 1st letter — Agni
- 2nd letter — Vayu

- 3rd letter — Surya
- 4th letter — Aakash
- 5th letter — Yamraj
- 6th letter — Varun
- 7th letter — Vrihaspati
- 8th letter — Parjanya
- 9th letter — Indra
- 10th letter — Gandharva
- 11th letter — Poosha
- 12th letter — Mitra
- 13th letter — Twashta
- 14th letter — Vasu
- 15th letter — Marudganas
- 16th letter — Soma
- 17th letter — Angira
- 18th letter — Vishwadeva
- 19th letter — Ashwini kumar
- 20th letter — Prajapati
- 21st letter — All the deities
- 22nd letter — Rudra
- 23rd letter — Brahma
- 24th letter — Vishnu

A devotee should then perform the ritual of 'nyas' by mentally establishing different words of the Gayatri mantra in the various parts of his body as given below –

- OM BHUH — in the heart,
- OM BHUVAH — in the head,
- OM SWAH — in the top-knot (Shikha),
- OM TATSAVITURVARENYAM — in the whole body,
- OM BHARGODEVASYA DHIMAHI — in both the eyes

- OM DHIYO YO NAH PRACHODAYAT — in both the hands.

Regular chanting of Gayatri mantra bestowes similar virtues attained by the study of all the four vedas. A brahmin who does not know Gayatri mantra is considered to be worse than a shudra. Anybody who chants Gayatri mantra attains salvation. body as given below –

2.1.13 A Brahmin's Livelihood

Describing how a brahmin should earn his livelihood, Lord Brahma said to Narad–Alms, which a brahmin gets without making any demand for it, is called Vritta. 'Unchhavritti' is even better than Vritti and it means collecting foodgrain which are scattered in places like fields, granary, market-place etc. A brahmin should accept the dakshina that his host gives him after the completion of yagya-ceremony. He should engage himself in educational activities. He can also earn his livelihood by engaging himself in other auspicious activities.

If the circumstances do not permit a brahmin to earn his livelihood by any of the above mentioned means, then he may opt for the occupation of a kshatriya. In such a case, he should endeavor to have mastery both over the vedas as well as different weaponary. Battle should be his last option. When the very existence of religiousness is at stake, he should wage a war against irreligious people and to protect the religion.

In an emergency situation, a brahmin can also choose the occupation of aVaishya and earn his livelihood by doing business or agriculture. But, while earning his livelihood by doing agriculture, he should in no circumstances abandon his own duties (duties of a brahmin). He should be honest while doing business and never try to exploit the customers.

2.1.14 Narottam – The Brahmin

Describing about the importance of five virtuous deeds, Pulastya said to Bheeshma—"The five supreme virtuous deeds are–obedience to parents, faithfulness towards husband, equanimity, not having enmity towards friends and devotion towards Lord Vishnu. By pleasing his father, one pleases all the deities. Mother is superior even to all the places of pilgrimage combined together.

Pulastya then narrated the same tale to Bheeshma, which lord Brahma had once told some prominent sages —

Once, there lived a famous Brahmin called Narottam. He had acquired divine powers on account of his austere penance but unfortunately he never treated his parents with respect.After taking his daily bath, Narottam hanged his wet clothes in the open sky without any support and they used to dry without falling down on the earth. This special power had made him very arrogant.One day, a crane flying in the sky passed dung on his face, which made him very furious. Narottam cursed the crane as the result of which it was burnt to death. His

special power vanished due to the sin acquired by killing an innocent bird. Now, no longer his clothes remained in suspended position in the sky.

Narottam became very sad. Suddenly he heard a heavenly voice instructing him to see a 'chandala' named Mook. "His discourses would be beneficial for you."- Said the heavenly voice. Narottam went in search of Mook–the chandal and found him in the servitude of his parents. Mook was a great devotee of his parents and his total devotion towards his parents had blessed him with an extraordinary power-his house used to hang in the air without any support.Narottam was deeply amazed at this wonderful sight. He wanted to know how Mook had acquired such divine powers. But, Mook requested him to wait, which made Narottam very angry. Mook then told Narottam—"I can talk to you only after attending to my parents. I am not that crane which was charred to death by your curse. If you don't have time then go and meet that 'faithful-wife. She will answer your questions."

Narottam did not know where that faithful wife lived, so he stood there wondering what to do next. Suddenly Lord Vishnu emerged from Mook's house disguised as a brahmin. He took Narottam to the 'faithful-wife's house. All along the way Lord Vishnu preached Narottam on the qualities of a chaste woman. As both of them were about to reach that chaste woman's house, lord Vishnu disappeared, leaving Narottam all alone.
Narottam requested the woman to enlighten him on the finer points of virtuosity. But, the woman was busy attending her husband and requested him to wait. Narottam threatened to curse her, to which the woman replied—I am not that crane whom you had cursed. If you are in a hurry then you can go and meet 'Dharm–Tulaadhar'. He is an honest businessman and is capable of answering your queries."

Lord Vishnu once again appeared from that woman's house disguised as a brahmin. Narottam asked him as to how were both Mook and faithful-wife aware of the incident in which the crane was charred to death. Lord Vishnu told him that both of them had acquired this special power by the virtue of their respective religiousness.

Lord Vishnu and Narottam proceeded towards the place where Dharmtuladhar did his business transactions. As they were about to reach the place, Lord Vishnu disappeared once again, leaving Narottam all alone.Narottam saw Dharmtuladhar busy in his dealings with total honesty. He requested him to reveal as to what made the wet clothes to hang in the air without any support. Dharmtuladhar requested him to wait but Narottam was in a hurry to get answer to his questions. Dharmtuladhar told Narottam–Please wait for sometime, as I am busy doing my business transactions. If you don't have time then you can go and meet Adrohak, who is fully capable of giving answer to your questions. Lord Vishnu once again accompanied him disguised as a brahmin.

When both of them were about to reach the place where Adrohak used to live,

lord Vishnu disappeared and Narottam was left all by himself, once again. Narottam requested Adrohak to preach on the essence of religiousness. Adrohak was a man of impeccable conduct and had full control over the sensual urges. He advised Narottam to meet the supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu, who lived nearby. Adrohak said– You would get answers to all your questions. He will reveal to you the reason that made wet clothes to hang in air without any support.Narottam then proceeded towards the place where the supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu lived. Lord Vishnu once again accompanied him in the guise of a brahmin.After reaching there, Narottam expressed his desire of seeing Lord Vishnu. The supreme devotee took him to a temple situated inside the house-premise.

Narottam was amazed to see the same brahmin, who had been accompanying him all along the way, siting on a lotus flower. He realized that the brahmin was lord Vishnu himself. Lord Vishnu blessed him and said—Be respectful towards your parents, if you want to attain to my abode. I dwell in the houses of people who are virtuous, truthful, possessed equanimity and who have full control over their passion. This is why you found me present at the homes of chandal, Tuladhar & Adrohak.

Narottam realized his mistake and decided to be in the servitude of his parents for the rest of his life.

2.1.15 The Significance of Rudraksha, Amla & Tulsi

Once, while describing about the importance of Rudraksha to the sages, Vyas said— One who wears a Rudraksha rosary is supreme among all human beings. The mere sight of such a holy man absolves people of their sin. A Rudraksha bead bears features of a Linga and yoni on it's surface. One should not wear a rudraksha on which above mentioned features are absent. Similarly two joint beads should never be worn. All the mantras become doubly powerful when chanted with the help of rudraksha-rosary.During Satya-yuga, there lived a mighty demon named Tripurasur. He had conquered the deities and was capable of moving in the space. The deities sought help of Lord Shiva, who killed Tripurasur by the sight of his third-eye. In the process, few drops of sweat, emanating from Shiva's body fell down on the earth. These sweat drops got transformed into a large Rudraksha-tree.

Amla is a very nutritious fruit and great religious significance has been attached to it. Amla fruit is very dear to Lord Vishnu and its use on the auspicious day of Ekadashi brings unmatched virtue. A person who regularly eats amla enjoys a long life.The following tale adequately describes the religious importance of amla –

Once upon a time, a chandala went into the forest for hunting. He hunted many deer and birds. Feeling hungry, he saw an amla tree and climbed up the tree. This way he satiated his hunger by eating sweet amla fruits. Unfortumately while he was climbing down the tree, he fell down and died.When the

attendants of Yamaraj arrived to take back his soul, they could not do so even after repeated attempts. The attendants of Yamaraj became very surprised and went to the sages for clarification. The sages revealed to the attendants that they could not go near the chandala's dead body, because he had eaten amla just before his death.

Such is the glory of amla!

Once Kartikeya asked Lord Shiva about the holiest tree, which was capable of giving salvation. Lord shiva replied—The Tulsi plant is supreme among all the vegetations. She is very dear to lord Vishnu and fulfill's all the desires of a man. Lord Krishna dwells near the place where there is a Tulsi plant. Spirits and ghosts never dare to venture near the Tulsi plant. If a man attaches a Tulsi leaf to his Shikha at the time of his death, he is liberated from all his sins. One who worships Lord Vishnu by offering Tulsi-leaves attains salvation.

2.1.16 The Importance of Surya's Worship

Once, while describing about the importance of Surya's worship to Vaishampayan, Sage Vyas narrated the following tale —

There lived a king named Bhadreshwar. He ruled over Madhyadesh. Once his left hand was infected with leprosy. Bhadreshwar, fearing the prospect of dreadful leprosy spreading to his whole body, decided to end his life. He expressed his desire to the head-priest. The head-priest cautioned Bhadreshwar that if he went ahead with his decision, then the whole kingdom would be destroyed. He said — 'You will be cured of leprosy, if you worship Lord Surya.'

The head-priest then told the king about the appropriate rituals of Surya–worship. King Bhadreshwar began his austerities and worshipped Lord Surya by chanting mantras and offering articles like Naivedya, fruits, Ardhya, Akshat etc to the deity.King Bhadreshwar was cured of his leprosy within a year by the virtue of his deep devotion towards Lord Surya.

2.2 Bhumikhand

This chapter contains 6 sections.

2.2.1 Different Types of Sin and Virtue

Once, Yayati requested Matali to describe the various sinful and virtuous deeds, which a man normally commits in his life.

Matali replied—'One who criticizes the vedas and follows the religion of other's after abandoning his own or torments virtuous people is a grave sinner. Similarly, not respecting one's parents, not giving 'dakshina' to a brahmin after the completion of a shraddh ceremony, studying the scriptures in an impure physical state are some other sinful deeds.

'One who obstructs a hungry man from having his food or thirsty person from

quenching his thirst commits a sin similar to that of killing a brahmin.

Matali described some other types of sins —

Back biting, seeing faults with others and demeaning their efforts, acquiring other's land by unfair means, killing innocent animals, having illicit relationship with women other than one's wife, telling lies, showing disrespect to the guests etc, are considered to be sinful deeds.

Describing about the various types of virtuous deeds, Matali said —

Non-violence, forgiveness, truthfulness, devotion towards god, benevolence, abstinence, oblation & meditation are some of the virtuous deeds. Donating food-grains, domesticated animals like horse, cow etc. giving water to a thirsty person are some other types of virtuous deeds.A person who donates wooden sandals a needy brahmin attains to the heaven. Worshipping Lord Shiva or Lord Vishnu enables a man to attain to the Shivaloka or Vishnuloka respectively.

2.2.2 King Yayati propagates Vaishnava-Dharma

King Yayati was the son of Nahush and a descendant of Soma–dynasty. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and had contributed a lot in the propagation of Vaishnava–dharma. Yayati had sent many emissaries in all directions to propagate Vaishnava–dharma. During Yayati's reign his subject were prosperous and were free from any kind of sorrow. Peace prevailed everywhere and people did not experience any natural calamity like draught or famine.

King Yayati enjoyed an unbelievably long life of one lakh years. He was blessed with eternal youth and his appearance was enough to give an inferiority complex to a young man. All this, he had attained by the virtue of his supreme devotion towards Lord Vishnu. Indra was very scared of Yayati's increasing popularity and feared that if his virtuosity remained intact, he would very soon become the ruler of heaven. Indra instructed Kamadeva and Rati to find some means so that king Yayati could be enticed by human weaknesses like lust & infatuation.

Kamadeva, accompanied by other Gandharvas went to Yayati's palace and sought his permission to stage a play. Yayati gave his permission and the play commenced. Rati appeared on the stage as a beautiful woman and was successful in corrupting the thoughts of Yayati. Yayati became so enchanted by Rati's beauty that he lost his senses and fell down unconscious. Finding the time opportune 'Vriddhavastha' (deity of old age) and 'Kamadeva' entered Yayati's body.This way the deities were successful in their designs and now the signs of old-age started to become evident in Yayati.

2.2.3 Yayati marries Ashrubindumati

Once, king Yayati went into a forest for hunting. He saw a stag, which had four horns and chased it. The deer led him deep into the forest and then

disappeared. Yayati was tired and thirsty. He saw a lake and decided to quench his thirst. First of all he took his bath and then drank sweet water from the lake.As Yayati was relaxing at the bank of that lake, he heard a sweet voice singing a song. Yayati proceeded towards the direction from which the sound was coming. He saw a beautiful woman singing a song. Her companion accompanied the beautiful woman.Yayati became enchanted by the divine beauty of that woman and wanted to marry her. The beautiful woman's companion told Yayati that her friend could marry him only after he shed the signs of his old age.

The beautiful woman was Ashrubindumati–the daughter of Rati.Vishala-her companion was the daughter of Varun. Yayati returned to his palace and requested his two sons–Taru and Yadu to exchange their youth in lieu of his old age, but both of them refused to oblige him. Yayati cursed both of them.

Yayati had a son—Puru from his wife named Sharmishtha. When he made the same request to Puru, he agreed without any hesitation. Yayati became pleased with Puru and appointed him as his successor.

Now, Yayati became young once again and went to meet Ashrubindumati. But, Ashrubindumati's friend Vishala was still not convinced and expressed apprehension that her friend would never play second fiddle to his two wives–Sharmishtha and Devayani.King Yayati, being blinded by his lust, assured Vishala that Ashrubindumati would enjoy the supreme authority and she had nothing to fear. He said–"I promise that you will be my only wife and I will have nothing to do with my wives."

This way Yayati married Ashrubindumati and enjoyed a blissful married life for twenty-thousand years. Once, Ashrubindumati expressed her desire of visiting all the divine places–Indraloka, Brahmaloka, Shivaloka and Vishnuloka. Yayati took back his old age from Puru and returned his youth. He appointed Puru as his successor and instructed his subject to live peacefully. But, the people wanted to be with Yayati, so all of them accompanied him to the heaven. Yayati visited all the divine places and ultimately attained to Vishnuloka.

2.2.4 Kunjal – The Enlightened Parrot

Once, while describing about the importance of a teacher, Lord Vishnu had narrated the following tale to king Ven— Sage Chyavan came from the lineage of Bhargav. Once, he arrived at Omkareshwar with the objective of acquiring knowledge. Since he was tired, he decided to take rest under the shade of a Banyan tree. A parrot named Kunjal lived on that tree. The parrot had four young ones–Ujjawal, Samujjwal, Vijjwal and Kapinjal. Kunjal was a very learned parrot and had mastery over all the scriptures. Once, Ujjawal requested Kunjal to give discourse on various aspects of religiousness. Kunjal said—The whole world is full of sorrow. A man can be liberated from his sorrow by the means of salvation because salvation is free from sorrow. Salvation can be attained with the help of abstinence, self-control and having deep devotion in lord Vishnu. The

soul being enlightened is also called 'Paramatma'. But, covered by the darkness of ignorance it becomes difficult for the soul to attain salvation. A devotee can meditate on both the forms of Lord Vishnu–Sakar (with form) & Nirakar (formless). But, meditating on the Sakar form is easy for anybody. On the other hand only an enlightened soul can meditate on the 'nirakar' form of Lord Vishnu. There are various austerities related with Lord Vishnu and which if observed by a devotee, pleases him–Jaya, Vijaya, Jayanti, Vanjuli, Tilgandha, Trihsprisha, Akshanda and Manoraksha. All these austerities are similar to different types of Ekadashi or Dwadashi Vrata. Similarly, two other austerities namely Ashunyashayan and Janmashtami are capable of freeing a man from all his sin. A devotee who chants Shatnaam stotra attains salvation.

2.2.5 Kunjal Preaches Vijjwal

Describing the virtue of benevolence to Vijjwal. Kunjal–the learned parrot narrated the following tale —

Once, there lived a king named Subahu who ruled over chola desha. A learned brahmin named Jaimini used to counsel him on religious and spiritual matters.One day, while Jaimini was giving a discourse on the virtue of benevolence, Subahu requested him to describe about those deeds that enables a man either to attain to the heaven or to hell.

Jaimini replied— One who earns his livelihood by improper means definitely goes to hell. Similarly, atheists, licentious people, proudy, backbiters and ungrateful people go to hell too. One who gobbles up other's wealth by illegal means or shows disrespect to his guest goes to hell.One who is a habitual liar or one who kills innocent animals or one who has abandoned the religious path is certain to go to hell.One who is truthful and engages himself in various virtuous deeds like penance, meditation, study of the scriptures, goes to the heaven. One who is respectful towards his elders and leads a virtuous life goes to the heaven. In the same manner, he who is benevolent and free from vices like jealousy hatred etc. goes to the heaven. Similarly, one who leads his life as per the instructions given in the scriptures or has full control over his sensual desires goes to the heaven.

King Subahu was so impressed by Jaimini's preaching that he decided to spend rest of his life in the service of lord Madhusudan. He performed countless oblations as long as he was alive and attained to Vishnuloka after his death.

2.2.6 Kunjal Narrates about his Previous Birth

Sage Chyavan, who had been listening to the narration of Kunjal, was amazed by his profound knowledge. He asked Kunjal—O great soul! Who are you? From where did you acquire such divine knowledge.'

Kunjal, who remembered everything about his previous birth said–

In my previous birth, I was the youngest son of a brahmin named Vidyadhar. My

name was Dharma Sharma. Seeing my dislike for study, my father became worried about my future. I used to waste my time loitering here and there. People used to make fun of my stupidity, which made me extremely sad. I decided to acquire knowledge but did not find anybody willing to teach me.

In due course of time I became old but was still an idiot. One day, I was sitting in a temple cursing my fate. Suddenly, a sage arrived there and asked me as to what made me so sad. I narrated my woeful tale. The sage felt pity on my condition and blessed me with divine knowledge that made me capable of having advance knowledge of all the future incidents of the world. Sage Chyavan was curious to know about the reason that made Dharma Sharma to be born as a parrot.

Kunjal replied— O Brahmin! A man is influenced by the company he keeps. The reason why I took birth as a parrot is related with an incident, which occurred in my previous birth. Once, a wicked fowler sold a parrot to a brahmin who in turn presented it to me. With the passage of time I became very attached with the parrot and gradually deviated from my virtuous path. As a result all my divine knowledge vanished and I became an idiot once again.

One day,a cat arrived and killed that parrot in my absence. I became very sad and used to spend my time crying over the dead parrot. Ultimately I died but even at the time of death, my mind was preoccupied with the thoughts of my beloved parrot. As a result, I was born as a parrot but fortunately I remembered my previous birth even while I was still in my mother's womb. I was full of remorse and used to curse myself for having wasted my life.Sage Chyavan was amazed by the narration of Kunjal–the learned parrot.

2.3 Swargakhand

This chapter contains 5 sections.

2.3.1 Some Prominent Holy Places in Bharat-Varsha

Once, sages requested Sutji to describe about the most prominent places of pilgrimage situated in Bharatvarsha. Sutji commenced his narration by describing the origin of creation and then switched over to the geographical characteristics of Bharatvarsha. Sutji said—'There are seven prominent mountain ranges in Bharatvarsha–Mahendra, Malay, Sahya, Shaktiman, Rikshavan, Vindhya and Pariyatra. Some prominent rivers supplying potable water to the inhabitants of Bharatvarsha are—Ganga, Sindhu, Saraswati, Godwari, Narmada, Shatadru, Yamuna, Vipasha, Mahanadi, Vidisham, Varuna etc. The names of the main Janapadas situated in the northern part of Bharatvarsha are Kuru, Panchal, Shalva, Matreya, Jaangal, Shoorsen, Pulind, Baudh, Chedi, Matsya, Bhoj, Sindhu, Utkal, Koshal, Madra, Kalinga, Kashi, Malav, Magadh, Videh, Anga, Banga, Surashtra, Kekay, Kashmir & Gandhar. Similarly, Janpadas like Dravid, Keral. Prachya, karnatak, Kuntal, chol, Sauhrid, Kona, Korak, Kalad, Mushal and Sutap are situated in the southern part of Bharatvarsha.

Sutji then described about the greatness of Pushkar teerth by recounting an incident related with the Pandavas—

"One day, Sage Narad visited the Pandavas who were living in exile. The Pandavas had visited many places during the course of their exile period and wanted to know about the fruits they had acquired due to their pilgrimage.

"Sage Narad then recounted an incident when king Dilip had once posed the same question to Sage Vashishth. Sage Vashishth while describing about the greatness of Pushkar said—Pushkar teerth is the holiest place where lord Brahma has his abode. Deities consider themselves fortunate to be at Pushkar. A person who takes a holy dip at Pushkar and worships lord Brahma acquires virtues equivalent to the accomplishment of the Ashwamedha yagya."

Sage Vashishth continued with the description of some other prominent places of pilgrimage like Jambumarg, Narmada Amarkantak etc.

2.3.2 Jambubarg, River Narmada, Amarkantak

Continuing with his narration, Sage Vashishth said— A man desirous of going on a pilgrimage should first of all visit Jambumarg, because it is revered even by the deities and the sages. By visiting this holy place a man acquires virtue equivalent to the accomplishment of an Ashwamedha yagya and attains to Vishnuloka. A man should then visit Tundulikashram, Agastya Ashram & Kanya Ashram, which are situated near Jambumarg. Taking a dip in the holy water of Kotiteerth, situated near Mahakal temple is believed to bestow undiminished virtue. Bhadravat is a famous place of pilgrimage related with Lord Shiva and paying a visit here gives virtue equivalent to donation of 1000 cows.

A man who takes holy dip in river Narmada and performs 'tarpan' in the name of manes acquires fruits similar to the accomplishment of Agnishtom yagya. Narmada is the holiest of all the river. A man becomes liberated from his sins by taking bath for three weeks in river Saraswati. Similarly it takes one week of regular bath in river yamuna for a man to become absolved of all his sins. The mere touch of Ganga water liberates a man from all his sins, but mere sight of river Narmada is enough to liberate a man from all his sins.

Kotirudras are believed to dwell in the vicinity of Amarkantak mountain. All together sixty crores and sixty thousand places of pilgrimage are situated all around this holy mountain. Anybody present in the vicinity of this mountain must refrain from any kind of sinful deeds. Visiting Amarkantak mountain during solar and Lunar eclipses is considered to be extremely auspicious. Similarly the confluence site of Narmada and Kaveri is considered to be sacrosanct. Anybody who takes a holy dip in the confluence of Narmada and Kaveri becomes liberated from his sins.

2.3.3 ‘Dharma-Teertha’ & Yamuna-Snan

Sage Narad continued with the description of various holy places and said— "A pilgrim must visit Dharma Teerth, which is named after the lord of death–Dharma. Once upon a time Dharmaraj had performed an austere penance at that place this is the reason why it became famous as Dharma Teerth. By visiting Dharma Teerth, a man liberated all his ancestors up to seventh generation. After that a pilgrim should go to Kalap-forest, Saugandhik-forest, Suvarna-Dhumavanti respectively. All the above mentioned holy places are capable of giving salvation."

Describing about the virtues of taking a holy dip in river Kalini (Yamuna) sage Narad said –

A person who takes a holy dip in Yamuna becomes liberated from all his sorrows. The virtue acquired by taking a bath in Yamuna is greater than paying visits to various holy places like Pushkar, Kurukshetra, Brahmavarta and Kashi.Taking a dip in Yamuna also helps in the fulfillment of all the desires of a man. Although, different rituals have been attributed to various yugas like Saytayuga–penance, Treta–Knowledge, Dwapar–yagya and Kaliyug–Donation, yet virtue of taking a holy dip in Yamuna transcends even time."

"Although the whole stretch of river Yamuna is believed to be holy, yet Yamuna flowing near Mathura holds special importance because of her deep association with lord Krishna."Narad narrated a tale to prove the significance of taking a bath in Yamuna.

"During Satyayuga there lived a Vaishya named Hemakundal. He had earned lot of wealth by dint of hard work. Although he was very rich yet happiness deluded him, as he had no progeny. He was worried as to who would inherit his property after his death.

"In course of time, Hemakundal attained old age and after realizing about the impermanence of the world indulged himself in virtuous deeds. He was blessed with two sons–Shrikundal & Vikundal. When both his sons grew up, Hemakundal went into the forest to do penance."

"Shri Kundal and Hemakundal squandered the whole wealth which their father had earned so painstakingly. Both of them were of loose moral character and had illicit relationship with many prostitutes. In a very short time they became poor and both of them starved to death. When the yamdoots reached yamloka after taking their souls, Yamraj ordered–'Put Shri Kundal in Raurav hell but send Vikundal to the heaven.' While Vikundal was being taken to the heaven he asked one of the yamdoots–'The sins committed by my brother and me were almost identitical then why is my brother being sent to hell while I am being sent to heaven.'

The yamdoot replied-You are being metted out this special treatment on account of your virtues acquired by bathing twice in river Yamuna.There was a brahmin friend of your's named Swamitra.You had accompanied him to Mathura and twice taken bath in the holy Yamuna. By the virtue of the first bath you became liberated from all your sins, while the second bath helped you in attaining to the heaven.Vikundal requested the yamdoot to allow his brother to accompany him to heaven. Yamdoot replied that his brother could accompany him to the heaven provided he donated all his virtues to him.
Vikundal agreed to donate his virtues to his elder brother for the sake of his liberation. This way, both Shrikundal and Vikundal attained to the heaven.

2.3.4 Kashipuri, Kapardishwar & Gaya

On being asked by Yudhishthir about the grandeur of holy places like Kashipuri, Kapardishwar & Gaya. Narad said —

Just as Lord Mahadev is supreme among all the deities, in the same manner Kashipuri holds a significant status among all the places of pilgrimage. Hence an individual should make it a point to visit Kashi once in his life time. The famous Shiva linga Kopardishwar is installed at Kashi and is said to fulfill all the desires of a man. Performance of various rituals at Kashi liberates a man from all his sins-all his flaws are eliminated automatically just by residing in Kashi.

A devotee who regularly practices meditation in the temple of Lord Kapordishwar attains Yogasiddhi within six months. Worshipping Lord Kapardishwar after taking a holy dip in Pishach-mochan kunda liberates a man from gravest of sin like 'Brahmahatya', etc. Gaya is considered to be a sacrosanct place of pilgrimage and various rituals for the pacification of the souls of dead ancestors are performed here. Anybody who offers Pindadaan and tarpan at Gaya not only liberates his ancestors but also himself. There is a very famous Banyan tree named Akshayvat at Gaya. Gaya is situated at the bank of river Falgu.

2.3.5 Puranas – The Embodiment of Sri Hari

According to Sutji, all the Puranas are nothing but the mediums through which Sri Hari manifests himself—Brahma Puran is said to be the Forhead of Srihari, Padma Puran is said to be the 'heart' of Srihari, Vishnu Puran is said to be the 'right arm' of Srihari. Shiva Puran is said to be the 'left arm' of Srihari. Shrimad Bhagawat is said to be His 'thigh', Narad Puran is said to be His 'navel', Markendeya Puran is said to be His 'right-foot'. Agni Puran is said to be His 'left foot', Bhavish Puran is said to be His 'right-knee', Brahma Vaivratapuran is said to be His 'left-knee'. Linga Puran is said to be His 'right ankle', Varaha Puran is said to be His 'left ankle' Skanda Puran is said to be the hair on the body of 'Sri Hari.

- Vaman Puran is said to be His Skin
- Kurma Puran is said to be His Back
- Matsya Puran is said to be His Stomach

- Garuda Puran is said to be His Bone-narrow
- Brahmanda Puran is said to be His Bone.

So, all the Puranas being manifestation of different parts of Sri Hari's body are very sacred and capable of bestowing salvation.

2.4 Patalkhand

This chapter contains 10 sections.

2.4.1 Sheshnag narrates the Tales of Sri Rama's Return from Lanka

Once, Sages requested Sutji to describe about Sri Ram's return from Lanka. Sutji narrated the same tale, which Sheshnag had once told Vatsyayan.Sheshnag said–After the killing of demon king Ravan, Sri Ram appointed Vibhishan as the king of Lanka. He then decided to return to Ayodhya on Pushpak-Viman, which Vibhishan had presented to him. He along with Sita, Laxman, Sugreev and Hanuman boarded the aircraft and flew towards Ayodhya.The earth looked beautiful from such a high altitude and Sri Ram was continuously describing about the importance of various places over which the aircraft flew. As the aircraft was about to enter the airspace of Ayodhya, Sri Ram recognized Bharat, who was living at Nandigram at that time. Bharat had vowed not to enter Ayodhya till the return of Sri Ram, hence he stayed at Nandigram situated at the outskirts of Ayodhya awaiting Sri Ram's return. He led an austere life as the result of which he had become weak and feeble.

On seeing Bharat, Sri Ram instructed Hanuman to inform him about his (Ram's) arrival. Hanuman went to the hermitage of Bharat and informed him about Sri Ram's arrival. Bharat's joy knew no bound and he expressed his desire to reward Hanuman for bringing such auspicious news. Bharat then accompanied Hanuman and went to meet Sri Ram.Sri Ram's heart was filled with grief when he saw Bharat, who looked like a hermit in his 'Valkal' and 'Kaupin'. On the other hand Bharat cursed himself for being the cause of Sri Ram's miseries. Bharat asked for Sri Ram's forgiveness and said—'O Lord! You had to go into exile only because of me. I can never be absolved of my sin.'

Sri Ram consoled him and after taking Bharat into his embrace enquired about his welfare. He told Bharat that he had to undergo the sufferings of exile because of his own destiny.'You are not at fault. Don't curse yourself for my misery.' said Sri Ram. At last all of them including Bharat boarded Pushpak Viman and the aircraft took- off for Ayodhya.Continuing with Sri Ram's tale, Sheshnag said–When Sumanth brought the news of Sri Ram's arrival at Ayodhya, people danced in joy, Preparations started being made for Sri Ram's grand reception. The whole city of Ayodhya was decorated with rows of lighted lamps.

Sri Ram and Sita alighted from the Pushpak Viman and both of them were carried in a palanquin to the palace. People stood in queues on both sides of the road with folded hands. Sri Ram blessed them by raising his hand.First of all

Ram went to meet Kaikayi who was full of remorse and guilt. Sri Ram consoled her and then went to meet Sumitra to pay his obeisance to her. At last, he went to meet his own mother–Kaushalya, who was dying to see him. Kaushalya blessed Sri Ram, Sita and Laxman. Bharat then instructed the royal astrologers to decide upon an auspicious moment for Sri Ram's coronation. Thus Sri Ram became the king of Ayodhya. During his reign peace and prosperity prevailed everywhere. People were virtuous and there was no sign of sin.

2.4.2 Ravana – The Mighty Demon

People of Ayodhya lived peacefully during Sri Ram's reign until one fateful day when they were struck by a bad news–Sri Ram had abandoned Sita after a Washerman leveled an unfair charge against her character. Such was the greatness of Sri Ram that opinion of each and every individual was given due respect irrespective of his position and status. One day, Sage Agastya arrived in the royal court of Sri Ram. After the formal Salutations were over. Sage Agastya complimented Sri Ram for killing Ravana.

Sri Ram asked Agastya–'Who was Ravana– the tormentor of deities? I am anxious to know about the origin of his whole clan."

Sage Agastya replied–Vishrava was the grandson of Lord Brahma. His father was sage Pulastya. Vishrava had two wives–Mandakini and Kaikasi. Mandakani's son was Kubera while Kaikasi was the mother of Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan. Kubera ruled over Lanka. One day, Kubera, came to see his parents boarded on his aircraft–Pushpak Viman. After he returned to Lanka, Ravana, who was very much impressed by Kubera's royal appearances asked Kaikasi–"Who was this fellow? From where did he acquire such an amazing aircraft."

Kaikasi revealed to Ravana that the guest was none other than his step-brother Kubera. She said–"Kubera is the son of your step mother–Mandakini. He has made his mother proud by his conduct but I am ashamed of you, because of your inconsequential existence. You are no better than a worm."

Ravan decided to prove his mother wrong by acquiring insurmountable power and authority. Ravana went to the forest and performed an austere penance for ten thousand years by standing on one foot. He fixed his gaze at the sun and never for a moment did he remove his gaze from it. Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan also engaged themselves in austere penance. At last, Lord Brahma became pleased and blessed Ravana with a vast kingdom. Ravan then started tormenting his step-brother Kumbhakarna. He snatched Kubera's Pushpak Viman and drove him out of Lanka. Ravan then turned his attention towards the deities and drove them out of heaven. The deities went to seek the help of Lord Brahma who in turn took them to Lord Shiva. Even Lord Shiva was clueless about the means by which the indomitable Ravana could be subdued. Ultimately all of them including Lord Shiva went to Lord Vishnu and sought his help.

Lord Vishnu assured them by saying —

"I shall take incarnation as Ram at a place called Ayodhya. Presently, Ayodhya is being ruled by Dashrath, who inspite of having three queens, does not have any son. I shall manifest myself as Ram. Don't worry! I shall eliminate the menace called Ravana." Sage Agastya also told Sri Ram that Ravana belonged to the caste called 'Brahmrakshas'. This way, Sage Agastya after having finished his narration looked at Sri Ram anticipating further queries.

2.4.3 Agastya Advises Sri Rama to Perform Ashvamedhya Yagya

Sri Ram requested sage Agastya to tell about the means by which he could become liberated from the sins of killing brahmins. Sage Agastya advised him to perform Ashwamedha-yagya. He also described the rituals of performing Ashwamedha Yagya— "Get a horse of white colour and after worshipping it on Vaishakh Purnima leave it to wander freely. Tie a piece of paper on its forehead on which your name and other details are mentioned. Soldiers should follow that horse wherever it goes. You should fight a battle against any king who dares to stop the horse. You should lead a celibate life till the horse returns back to the same place from where it had been let loose. It is customary for the performer of Ashwamedha yagya to indulge himself in benevolent deeds till the completion of Ashwamedha yagya." Sri Ram agreed to perform Ashwamedha yagya. He went to the seashore accompanied by numerous sages. He then cultivated a vast expanse of land with the help of a golden plough. A large oblation site was constructed and thus began Ashwamedha yagya under the supervision of Vashishth.

2.4.4 The Horse is Let Loose

As per the advice of Sage Vashishth, Sri Ram instructed his soldiers to bring a white-horse. A white parasol was fixed on its back and the horse was decorated with colourful clothes. The horse was then let loose and the faithful soldiers of Sri Ram followed it wherever the horse went.A gold-sheet was hanged in the horse's neck and upon which was inscribed–This horse belongs to Sri Ram–the son of Dasharath. Anybody who dares to stop this horse will meet ruthless punishment.

Shatrughan followed the horse as per the instruction of his elder brother – Sri Ram. Bharat and Pushkal also accompanied him. A huge army led by Kalnemi was marching behind the horse.

2.4.5 Lav Fastens the Horse

Some of the kings tried to stop the horse, but were defeated by Shatrughan. This way the horse continued to move ahead without any problem till it reached the bank of river Ganga.It was early morning and Lav after noticing the presence of horse become curious. He went near the horse and tried to read the inscription hanging down it's neck. He made fun of the might of Sri Ram and fastened the horse.The soldiers tried to release the horse but Lav severed their arms. They returned to Shatrughan and narrated the whole incident to him.

2.4.6 Lav Vanquishes the Whole Army

Shatrughan became extremely furious after seeing the condition of his injured soldiers. He instructed Kalnemi to teach Lav a lesson. Kalnemi confronted Lav with a huge army and a ferocious battle took place. Lav managed to kill Kalnemi, which created havoc in the rival's army. The surviving soldiers tried to hold their ground but were forced to flee on account of a fierce assault from Lav.

Shatrughan then ordered Pushkal to fight Lav but he became unconscious after being hit by Lav's arrow. Now, Shatrughan's anger crossed all limits and he ordered Hanuman to kill Lav.Hanuman uprooted a large tree and tried to hit Lav, but Lav cut that tree into hundred pieces with a volley of arrows. Lav then released many arrows in the direction of Hanuman. Hanuman fought valiantly but ultimately he fell down unconscious.

2.4.7 Lav Becomes Unconscious

When Shatrughan learnt about Hanuman's fate he was infuriated and went to fight Lav. But when he saw a tender looking child in front of him he was surprised. Shatrughan asked –

'O brave child! Who are you! Who is your father?'

But Lav was not interested in his irrelevant queries and challenged him for a duel. Shatrughan was left with no other option but to fight. A tremendous battle was fought between them. Shatrughan released volleys of arrow towards Lav but all of them were neutralized by him. For a brief time Shatrughan lost his consciousness. After regaining his consciousness, he aimed his most lethal weapon towards Lav. The arrow hit Lav and he fell down unconscious. Lav's companions went and informed Sita about the whole incident. Kush came forward to fight against Sri Ram's army. When he reached the battlefield he saw Lav who was held captive by the enemy's army's. By that time, Lav had regained his consciousness and after seeing Kush he somehow managed to free himself from the clutches of his captors.

Now, both the brothers launched a fierce attack on the enemy. The whole army of Sri Ram started running helter and shelter. It did not take much time for Lav and Kush to vanquish the whole army. All the great warriors like Hanuman, Sugreeva, Pushkal, Angad Veermani and even Shatrughan were either held captive or injured in the battle.Both the brothers fastened Hanuman and Sugreeva with ropes and took them to Sita. Sita immediately recognized Hanuman and Sugreeva. She instructed both her sons to set them free as well as the horse. Lav and Kush followed the instruction of Sita and released everybody from their captivity. Sita then whispered—'May all the dead soldiers become alive.' Her words came true and all the dead soldiers became alive once again. Shatrughan regained his consciousness too.

2.4.8 The Army Returns to Ayodhya

Shatrughan decided to return to Ayodhya. He instructed Sumati to make all the necessary arrangements for the safe return of the Caravan, which comprised not only of Sri Ram's army but also of all the defeated kings and their vanquished armies. When Sri Ram came to know about their arrival, he sent Laxman to receive them. Laxman received the victorious army with all the honour and the all of them came to the palace. Sri Ram curiously asked Sumati about everything that had happened.

Sumati paraded all the vanquished kings who had made the mistake of stopping the horse– Sumad, Sabahu, Daman, Satyavan, Surath, etc. He then narrated the brave deed of Lav and Kush.He also revealed how mighty warriors like Hanuman, Sugreeva Shatrughan etc had been defeated by both of them.

2.4.9 Sri Rama sends Laxman to bring Sita

Sage Valmiki was present in Ayodhya to attend the Ashwamedha yagya. Sri Ram asked him about the identity of the two children–Lav and Kush, Valmiki said — Sita was pregnant at the time you had abandoned her. I gave her refuge in my hermitage where she gave birth to twins–Lav and Kush. Both the children were brought up in my hermitage with love and care. I taught them all the sacred texts and scriptures and made them masters of various weaponries. So, Lav and Kush are your sons. You must bring Sita back to Ayodhya with due honour, because she is pure and chaste. Moreover your whole army owe its life to her."

Sri Ram's heart was filled with grief. He instructed Laxman to bring Sita along with Lav and Kush. Laxman went to Valmiki's hermitage and requested Sita to return to Ayodhya. Sita refused to return but sent Lav and Kush along with Laxman. When Sri Ram found that only Lav and Kush had come, he once again sent Laxman to bring Sita. Laxman followed his instruction and went to Valmiki's hermitage for the second time.Meanwhile, Valmiki instructed Lav and Kush to sing the praise of Sri Ram in their melodious voice. Everybody was moved by their soulful rendition. Sri Ram took Lav and Kush in his embrace.

2.4.10 Sita Returns to Ayodhya

Sri Ram eulogised all the revered sages who had arrived to attend the Ashwamedha yagya. The holy water of Saryu was brought and sprinkled in the yagya kund where Ashwamedha yagya was being performed, amidst the chanting of vedic mantras.Hardly had Sri Ram touched the horse with his hands then it transformed into a human being. Everybody was amazed by this incident. Sri Ram asked that man as to how he had attained the form of a horse. The man revealed to the assembled people that he had become a horse due to Durvasa's curse. 'Later on Sage Durvasa had mercy on me and assured that I would regain my human form by the divine touch of Sri Ram.'

Having said this the man attained to the heaven. In course of time Sri Ram

organised two more Ashwamedha yagyas and his glory reverberated through all the three worlds.

2.5 Uttarkhand

This chapter contains 23 sections.

2.5.1 Badrik-Ashram

Once, on being asked by the sages about the greatness of Badrikasharam, Sutji narrated the same tale, which Lord Shiva had once told sage Narad —

Lord Mahadeva had told Narad that altogether there were one lakh and twenty-five thousand mountains and Badrikashram was supreme among them. Lord Mahadeva said—Badrikasharam is the abode of Lord Nara-Narayan. Narayan–the origin of all creations has four arms and his complexion is dark. Narayan manifests himself in both forms–Sakar as well as Nirakar. He is the eternal Purusha and is worshipped by people during the full period of Uttarayan. Since Badrikashram is covered with snow during the period of Dakshinayan, Narayan is not worshipper during these six months. All the deities dwell at Badrikasharam. The sages live in their hermitages at Badrikasharam. River Alaknanda flows at Badrikasharam. Anybody taking a dip in the holy water of Alaknanda becomes liberated from his sins.

2.5.2 The Descent of River Ganga

Describing about the reason why river Ganga was brought down on the earth, Lord Mahadeva told Narad— King Bhagirath was the architect of Ganga's arrival on the earth. He wanted to liberate his dead ancestorss from the curse of Sage Kapil.King Sagar came from the lineage of the famous king–Harishchandra. Sagar had two queens. The elder queen had sixty thousand sons while the younger queen had just one–Panchajan. Panchajan's son was Anshuman, who himself was the father of Dilip. Dilip was the father of Bhagirath.

Bhagirath did an austere penance on the Himalayas for ten thousand years. As a result, river Ganga descended on the earth. I (Shiva) held her in the locks of my hair and she remained there for ten thousand more years. Bhagirath requested me to release Ganga so that his ancestors could be liberated. I agreed to release Ganga and Bhagirath took her to the Patalloka where his ancestor's had been charred to death due to Kapil's curse. Bhagirath sprinkled the water of Ganga on the ashes of his ancestors and each of them attained salvation as a result.Eventually, Ganga resurfaced at Haridwar–the most sacred place of pilgrimage.

2.5.3 Dasharatha Pacifies Shani

Sage Narad curiously asked Lord Mahadeva as to what made Shani such a volatile planet.Lord Mahadeva replied— Shani is extremely violent by nature and everybody is scarred of this planet. Once, the royal astrologer of Dasharath was petrified at the prospect of Shani entering the constellation of Rohini and warned him of its dire consequences. 'If the Shani is not prevented from

entering Rohini, then famine would occur lasting for more than twelve years.' said the royal astrologers.

Dasharath went above the sky to subdue the might of Shani well armed with divine weapons. Shani became terrified on seeing Dasharath in such a menacing mood and expressed his willingness to fulfill his desires.

2.5.4 Qualities of a Vaishnava

Giving a detailed description of the qualities of a Vaishnava, Lord Mahadeva told Narad —

A person who has total devotion in Lord Vishnu is called a Vaishnava. He is truthful, kind and forgiving by nature. He engages himself in austere penance and refrains from any kind of violence. He wears a Tulsi bead in his neck and puts on tilak. He is well versed in sacred text like the vedas, Purans etc.The mere sight of a Vaishnava is enough to liberate a sinner from all his sins. Feeding a Vaishnava bestowes virtue equivalent to feeding thousand of ordinary Brahmins.

2.5.5 Indraprastha

The sages enquired from Sutji about the holiest city situated on the banks of river yamuna.

Sutji narrated the tale which Sage Saubhari had once told Yudhishthir—Once, Narad and Parvat were travelling through an aerial route, while they were flying over Khandav forest, they were lured by the beautiful sight of river Yamuna. They decided to take rest for a while. Both of them descended down and entered river yamuna to take their bath.Meanwhile, King Shibi who ruled over Ushinar saw them. He eagerly waited at the bank of Yamuna. When Narad and Parvat emerged out of the yamuna, they found king Shibi eagerly waiting for them. Meanwhile king Shibi had noticed the remains of numerous 'havan-kundas' (oblation-altars) spread in a large area.

After the formal exchanges of pleasantaries were over, King Shibi asked Narad about those havan- kundas.

Narad replied–During ancient times Indra had performed numerous Yagyas at this place to express his gratitude to Lord Vishnu, with whose blessings he had regained the heaven from the clutches of Hiranyakashipu. In course of time, this place became famous as Indraprastha. This sacrosanct place is holier than all the holy places combined together. Indraprastha is spread in the area of one yojan from east to west and four yojans from north to south.

2.5.6 Vaikunth – The Abode of Lord Vishnu

Describing about the grandeur of Vaikunth, Lord Mahadeva told Parvati–A person who has total devotion in Lord Vishnu attains to Vaikunth after his death. Vaikuntha is the abode of Vishnu and constitutes of numerous Janapadas. The

magnificence of Vaikunth is beyond description and it houses many grand palaces fully decorated with jewels and diamonds.The central part of Vaikuntha is called Ayodhya and is well protected by dwarpals named Chanda, Prachanda, Bhadra, Subhadra, Jaya, Vijay, Dhata and Vidhata.Vaikunth is inhabited by countless divine people who live in well illuminated houses.

In the central part of Ayodhya is situated the 'antahpuri' of Lord Vishnu. It is inhabited by celestial beauties–apsaras. There is a divine Canopy situated just at the centre of antahpuri, where Lord Vishnu has his divine throne. The divine throne is surrounded by deities as well as by the embodiments of all the four Vedas— Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. The deities—Agni, Surya and Chandrama have their dwellings at the centre of Vishnu's throne.There is a grand pedestal called yogapeeth established on the throne. A beautiful lotus flower is established on the yogapeeth on which is seated Lord Vishnu along with his consort- Laxmi.

Lord Vishnu appears divine in his complexion of a blue lotus, whose radiance is enough to subdue crores of sun. He has radiant ear-rings hangings down his earlobes. His forehead is covered with curly hair. He has the famous 'Kaustubh mani' in his neck. He holds a conch and a chakra in each of his two hands and the remaining two hands are in the posture of giving blessings.

2.5.7 The Incarnations of Matsya and Kurma

Once, goddess Parvati expressed her desire to know about all the incarnations of Lord Vishnu.Lord Mahadeva replied– Lord Brahma had created numerous Prajapatis like Bhrigu, Marichi, Atri, Daksha, Kardam, Pulastya, Pulaha, Angira and Kratu. Marichi was the father of Kashyap. Sage Kashyap had four wives– Aditi, Diti, Kadru and Vinta.Aditi was the mother of Deities while Diti gave birth to demons like–Makar, Hayagreeva, Mahabali, Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakashipu Jambha, Maya etc. Makar was a mighty demon, Who after deceitfully acquiring the Vedas from Lord Brahma had hidden himself inside an ocean. Lord Brahma requested Vishnu to liberate the sacred Vedas from the possession of Makar.

Lord Vishnu then took the incarnation of Matsya and after killing Makar gave back the vedas to Lord Brahma. Durvasa was the son of Sage Atri. Once, he went to Indraloka to see Indra. At that time, Indra was planning to go out somewhere. Durvasa presented a garland of Parijat flowers to Indra. Indra, after receiving the garland from Durvasa kept it carelessly on the forehead of his elephant-Eravat. This garland was trampled under its feet by the elephant, which infuriated Sage Durvasa. He cursed Indra by saying—Immense prosperity has made you arrogant. But you will become a pauper within a very short time.

Durvasa's words came to be true and Indra found that not only the heaven but all the three worlds had become bereft of goddess Laxmi. Prosperity vanished and poverty prevailed everywhere.The deities became worried and went to take the help of Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma took the deities to Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu became pleased with their eulogy and said –

I will take incarnation as Kurma. If the ocean were churned with the help of Mandarachal mountain and Vasuki, then goddess Laxmi would manifest herself. I shall hold the Mandarachal mountain on my back.This way the churning of ocean commenced. The Mandarachal mountain was uprooted and placed inside the 'Ksheer-Sagar' and which rested on the back of Lord Kurma. The serpent–Vasuki, was held by deities and demons on both the ends. First of all the most venomous poison–Kalkut emerged from the ocean. Seeing both the deities and demons unwilling to accept it. (Lord Shiva) drank it.
After the emergence of Kalkut, goddess Daridra and Varuni manifested themselves. Similarly, Eravat- elephant, Uchchaishrava-horse, Dhanvantaari, Surabhi–cow and Parijat- tree emerged from the ocean.Ultimately, goddess Laxmi manifested herself. The deities requested her to dwell in the heart of Lord Vishnu and bless all the three worlds by her presence. Goddess Laxmi agreed and blessed them.

2.5.8 NriSimha Incarnation

Continuing with the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Lord Mahadeva told Parvati —

Sage Kashyap had two mighty sons from Diti–Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. Hiranyaksha had once carried the earth to Rasatala. The deities requested Lord Vishnu to rescue the earth. Lord Vishnu took the incarnation of a boar and killed Hiranyaksha with his sharp horn.When Hiranyakshipu learnt about his brother's death he went to Merugiri mountain and started doing penance to please me (Lord Shiva). I blessed him with immortality, Later on, Hiranyakashipu married Uttanpad's daughter–Kalyani and had a son named Prahlad from her.Inspite of being born in the clan of a demon, Prahlad proved to be an extremely religious child and was a supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu.

When Hiranyakshipu came to know about Prahlad's religious tendency, he tried his best to stop him from worshipping Vishnu. But, all his efforts went in vain and Prahlad continued to worship Lord Vishnu.Hiranyakashipu instructed his subordinates to kill Prahlad but each time he came out unharmed. One day, Hiranyakashipu pulled out his sword and said—'You say that Vishnu is omnipresent. Is he present in this pillar?' Having said like this he assaulted the pillar with his sword. Suddenly to his Sheer amazement, Lord Vishnu manifested himself from that pillar in the form of Nrisimha.

Hiranyakashipu had been blessed by Lord Shiva that he could be killed neither by a man nor a beast. No weapon could harm him. He could be killed neither during the day nor during the night. Hiranyakashiu had taken into consideration all the possible threat perceptions to his life and tried to become immortal.But, Lord Vishnu takes incarnation to protect the humanity whenever religiousness is under threat. This time, Lord Vishnu took incarnation as Nrisimha (partly lion and partly human) and tore apart his belly with his sharp nails.After the death of

Hiranyakashipu, Prahlad was coronated as his successor. Prahlad ruled justly and his subject were happy and satisfied.

2.5.9 Vaman Incarnation

Continuing with the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Lord Mahadeva told Parvati —

Prahlad had a son named Virochan.The most benevolent king–'Mahabahu-Bali' was Virochan's son. Bali had defeated the deities and ruled over all the three worlds. Sage Kashyap commenced the most austere penance–Payovrata to help the deities regain their lost kingdom (heaven) once again. He was accompanied by his wife–Aditi in his penance which lasted for one thousand years. At last, Lord Vishnu became pleased by their penance and appeared before them. Sage Kashyap narrated the woeful tales of the deities and requested him to make Indra the Lord of all the three worlds. Lord Vishnu promised that he would take incarnation as Vaman.In course of time, Aditi became pregnant and ultimately gave birth to Lord Vaman. Lord Vaman appeared in the form of a 'Brahmchari'. He wore a deer–Skin and carried a stick and a 'mekhala' in both his hands. Lord Vishnu enquired the deities about the future course of action. The deities informed him that Bali was busy performing a yagya and he would not turn down any demand made to him because if he did so there was a fear of loosing all his virtues attained by the performance of the yagya.

Lord Vaman went to the oblation site where Bali was performing a yagya and demanded a small piece of land measured by his three steps. Bali agreed to meet the demand of his guest inspite of Shukracharya's warning.Bali resolved to donate land by holding holy water in his palm. Now, Lord Vaman abandoned his dwarfish form and appeared in a giant form. He measured the whole earth by his first step. Lord Vishnu then measured the whole sky by his second step. The helpless Bali agreed to donate all the three worlds to protect his vow.Ultimately, Lord Vishnu sent Bali to the Rasatala and thus Indra became the ruler of heaven once again.

2.5.10 Sri Rama’s Birth

Describing about Sri Ram's incarnation Lord Mahadeva told Parvati–'Once, Swayambhuva Manu had expressed his desire of having Lord Vishnu as his son to which Lord Vishnu had agreed. During tretayuga Manu manifested himself as Dasharath and Vishnu kept his promise by taking birth as his son–Sri Ram. Similarly, during dwaparyuga Manu was born as Vasudev and Lord Vishnu kept his word by taking birth as his son–Krishna. After the completion of one thousand divine years, Manu will be born in the village of Sambhal as Harigupta and lord Vishnu will take birth as his son–'Kalki'.

Lord Shiva then continued with the incarnation of Sri Ram and said–'Sage Vishrava was the son of Pulasya and was married to Kekashi. Ravan and Kumbhakarna were born to the couple. Sage Vishrava also had a daughter

named Shurpanakha and a virtuous son named Vibhishan.Ravan and Kumbhakarna did austere penance to please me (Lord Shiva). When I appeared before Ravan he requested the boon of immortality from me. After receiving the boon, Ravan became very arrogant and started tormenting the inhabitants of all the three worlds. The deities became scarred and took the refuge of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu assured them that he would solve their problem by taking incarnation as Sri Ram.

Dasharath came from the lineage of Surya. He had three queens—Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Once, Dasharath performed a Vaishnav Yagya with the objective of acquiring a son. Lord Vishnu appeared and assured him that he would take incarnation as Sri Ram in a short time. Lord Vishnu gave a bowl of divine kheer to Dasharath, which he distributed amongst his three queens. In course of time, Kaushalya gave birth to Sri Ram on the auspicious day of Chaitra-Navami. The deities and the sages rejoiced at his birth.

2.5.11 Sri Rama Grows Up

Continuing with the tale of Sri Ram, Lord Mahadeva told Parvati–Dasharath requested Vashishth to perform the Jaatkarm Sanskar of Sri Ram. In course of time Kaikeyi gave birth to Bharat–an incarnation of Panchajanya conch. Similarly, Sumitra gave birth to two sons–Laxman and Shatrughan. Laxman was the incarnation of Sheshnag while Shatrughan was the incarnation of Sudershan chakra. Sri Ram and his brothers received education under the guidance of Sage Vashishth. In a very short time they became proficient in all the scriptures and mastered various weaponaries. Although all the four brothers were very close to each other, yet Laxman could not bear to live in Ram's separation even for a moment and was specially close to him.

Sita manifested herself from the field while Janak was ploughing it. King Janak brought up Sita with great love and care. At that time, Vishwamitra was busy performing a grand yagya at Siddhashram. But the demons created numerous problems and made it impossible for him to accomplish the yagya. Vishwamitra went to Ayodhya and requested Dasharath to send Sri Ram and Laxman along with him so that the yagya could be accomplished without any problems. Dasharath agreed to send Sri Ram and Laxman along with Vishwamitra.This way, Vishwamitra returned to his hermitage acompanied by both the brothers. Garuda presented a pair of bow and imperishable set of arrows to both the brothers.

While staying at the hermitage Sri Ram and Laxman killed many demons like Taraka and Subahu. When Marich tried to disrupt the yagya, Sri Ram attacked him with Pavan-astra, which sent Marich flying across the sea-shore.Meanwhile, on learning that Janak was performing Vajapeya yagya at Janakpur, Vishwamitra took Sri-Ram and Laxman to attend it. On the way Sri Ram liberated Ahalya who had turned into a rock after being cursed by her husband.After reaching Janakpur, Sri Ram broke Lord Shiva's bow and married Sita. Laxman married Urmila. Dasharath had come to attend the marriage

ceremony accompanied by Bharat and Shatrughan. Bharat was married to Mandavi while Shatrughan married Shrutkeerti.

Meanwhile, on learning that Sri Ram had broken Shiva's bow, Parshuram arrived there and challenged him, but ultimately Parashuram realized about the divinity of Sri Ram and accepted his superiority.At last, Sri Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan returned to Ayodhya alongwith their respective consorts.

2.5.12 Sri Rama's Exile

Lord Mahadeva continued with the tale of Sri Ram and told Parvati –Dasharath wanted to appoint Sri Ram as his successor but Kaikeyi did not like this idea. She wanted Bharat to be made the king of Ayodhya and Sri Ram to be sent into exile for 14 years. Once, Kaikeyi had saved Dasharath's life while he was fighting a battle against the demons. To show his gratitude, Dasharath had promised two boons to her. At that time, Kaikeyi had told Dasharath that she would make her demand at the appropriate time.

This way, Dasharath was compelled by Kaikeyi to accept the two demands. As a result, Sri Ram was sent into exile. Bharat refused to become the king of Ayodhya and vowed to wait till Sri Ram returned. Dasharath could not bear the sorrow of Ram's separation and died in his sorrow. Bharat tried his best to convince Sri Ram to change his mind and accept the throne, but Sri Ram did not listen to his request. Bharat then brought Sri Ram's wooden-sandal and kept it on the throne. He vowed to spend rest of his life in austerities till Sri Ram returned.

While Sri Ram was still in exile, he went to the hermitage of Sage Atri and received his blessings. Atri's wife- Anasuya preached Sita on the virtues of chastity. Sri Ram also visited hermitages of some other prominent sages like Sharbhanga, Suteeksha, Agastya etc. Once, while Sri Ram was living in Panchavati, Shurpanakha arrived there. Shurpanakha was Ravana's sister and wanted to marry Sri Ram, But Laxman severed her nose and ears. She went to a mighty demon named Khar and narrated her woeful tale. Khar attacked Ram with a huge army, which comprised of brave warriors like Trishira Dushan etc. Sri Ram was Victorious in this battle and Khar, Trishira and Dushan were killed.

Shurpanakha went to Ravan and informed him about the misdeeds of Ram. Ravan was infuriated and wanted to take revenge. He abducted Sita with the help of Marich.When Jatayu saw Ravan carrying Sita to Lanka, he fought with valiance but was injured in the ensuing battle.Sri Ram went in search of Sita and met Jatayu, who was injured and who informed Ram that Sita had been abducted by the demon king Ravan.Sri Ram met Hanuman at the Rishyamook mountain. Later on he befriended Sugreeva on the advice of Hanuman. Sugreeva had enemity with his brother-Bali. Sri Ram killed Bali and made Sugreeva the king.

Sri Ram requested Hanuman to find out the whereabouts of Sita. Hanuman

went to Lanka and found Sita at Ashoka Vatika. He destroyed the garden and killed many demons including Ravana's son–Akshay Kumar. Ultimately, he was captured by Meghnath and taken to Ravana's court. Ravan ordered Hanuman's tail to be ignited. Hanuman then burnt the city of Lanka and returned to Sri Ram. When Sri Ran came to know about the exact location of Sita, he decided to attack Lanka with a huge army, which comprised of monkeys. The army camped at the sea-shore where Vibhishan came to meet him.

A bridge was built across the ocean and the army reached Lanka. A fierce battle took place in which many demons were killed. At last, Ravan came forward to fight against Sri Ram but was killed.Sri Ram appointed Vibhishan as the king of Lanka and blessed him. Vibhishan presented his pushpak Viman to Sri Ram. All of them boarded the Pushpak Viman and flew towards Ayodhya. On the way Sri Ram met Bharat who was still awaiting his arrival at Nandigram. Sri Ram was very pleased to meet Bharat. Ultimately all of them returned to Ayodhya.

2.5.13 Sri Rama's Coronation

Describing the coronation of Sri Ram Lord Mahadeva told Parvati–People of Ayodhya rejoiced at the return of Sri Ram. An auspicious day was chosen for his coronation and Sri Ram became the king of Ayodhya amidst the chantings of Vedic mantras. Sri Ram ruled over Ayodhya for one thousand years without any problem. Meanwhile, some ignorant people started pointing out fingers at the character of Sita.Sri Ram decided to abandon Sita in the forest to quell the rumour. Sita was pregnant at that time. Feeling pity on her condition, Valmiki took her to his hermitage where Sita gave birth to Lav and Kush.

Meanwhile Sri Ram decided to perform Ashwamedha yagya at the bank of river Gomati. But, since the yagya could not have been accomplished without Sita, therefore he performed the rituals seated beside a golden idol of Sita, In the mean time Valmiki arrived there, accompanied by Sita. He requested Sri Ram to accept Sita, vouching for her chastity.Sri Ram told Valmiki–'I am confident of Sita's chastity but she will have to prove her chastity for the satisfaction of common people.'

Sita was deeply hurt by Sri Ram's unkind remarks. She said–'May mother earth swallow me if I ever had thought about any man other than my lord Sri Ram.' Hardly had Sita finished her lines than the earth cracked and Sita vanished into that crevice. Sri Ram's heart was filled with remorse but thinking that it was perhaps in his destiny to live in separation with Sita, returned to Ayodhya accompanied by Lav and Kush. In course of time, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi left for heavenly abode. Sri Ram continued to rule Ayodhya for 10,000 more years.

One day, Kala (death) arrived and reminded Sri Ram that the time had arrived for him to leave his mortal body. Meanwhile Laxman became aware of Sri Ram's decision of leaving his mortal body. He gave up his life by taking samadhi in river Saryu. Sri Ram could not bear the sorrow caused by Laxman's

bereavment. He appointed Lav and Kush as the kings of Dwarawati and Kushawati respectively and decided to leave for heavenly abode.

Sri Ram entered the water of river Saryu, flowing at the distance of three yojans from Ayodhya.

2.5.14 Sri Krshna

Parvati requested Lord Mahadeva to narrate the divine tales of Vasudeva Krishna. Lord Mahadeva replied–Vasudev was the descendant of yadu. His father was Devameedha. He was married to Devaki–the daughter of Ugrasena.Ugrasena also had a mighty son named Kansa. Kansa was extremely affectionate towards his sister Devaki. After her marriage, while Devaki was going to her husband's house on a chariot being driven by Kansa, suddenly a heavenly voice was heard.

'Kansa, you would meet death at the hands of Devaki's eighth son.'

Kansa became very scarred and wanted to kill his sister then and there. But, Vasudev requested Kansa to spare Devaki's life and promised to hand over any child that she gave birth to. Thus Kansa imprisoned both Vasudev and Devaki.In course of time, Devaki gave birth to seven sons and Kansa killed each of them. Lord Sri Hari manifested himself when Devaki conceived for the eighth time. It was the month of Shravan and the day was 'Krishna-ashtami' when Sri Hari took his incarnation at midnight. Soon after taking his incarnation he gave a glimpse of his divine form to Vasudev and Devaki. On the instruction of Sri Hari, Vasudeva carried the infant to Nand's house. He had no problem in moving out of the prison as all the guards had fallen asleep due to the illusion of Sri Hari.

On seeing the swift currents of overflooded yamuna, Vasudev became worried. But the level of river Yamuna receded as soon as Sri Krishna touched the river with his feet. Sheshnag protected Sri Krishna from heavy rain with his thousand hoods. When Vasudev reached Nand's house he found that Nand's wife–Yashoda had given birth to a baby girl. Yashoda was sleeping at that time and Vasudev had no problem in exchanging Sri Krishna with that baby girl. Vasudev then returned to the prison and laid down the baby girl beside Devaki.

The baby-girl started crying and the guards immediately woke up. They informed Kansa about the birth of Devaki's eighth child. Kansa tried to kill that baby girl by smashing her head, but she escaped from his hands and flew up in the sky. She thundered—'Your death is certain as your assasin has already taken birth.' Kansa was terrified at the prospect of his death. He instructed his soldiers to kill all the infants' whereever they were to be found in his kingdom. He also ordered the release of Vasudev and Devaki, as there was no point keeping them in captivity.Meanwhile, Sri Krishna grew up under the guardianship of Nand and Yashoda.

One day Kansa sent a wicked ogress named Putna to kill Sri Krishna. Putma

had applied poison on her breasts and tried to kill Krishna by breast-feeding him. Sri Krishna sucked her breast with such ferocity that she died. Thus, Sri Krishna gave the first glimpse of his divinity to the inhabitants of Vajra.Sri Krishna accomplished many such divine deeds during his childhood. He grew up to be a mischieveous child and used to play numerous pranks on the fellow Gopis. He used to steal their butter and curd. One day, all the Gopis complained to Yashoda about Sri Krishna's misdeeds. Yashoda became angry and tied him with a wooden-mortar in order to prevent him from troubling the Gopis. She then placed that mortar between two trees so that Krishna could not move. But, Sri Krishna toddled away uprooting both the huge trees.

Once, a demon named Bakasur disguised himself as a huge heron and tried to kill Sri Krishna. But, Sri Krishna hit him with a stone with such force that he met an instant death.This way Sri Krishna had killed many ferocious demons while he was still a small child. Some of them well Kaliya–the serpent etc, Dhenukasur, Arisht, Keshi etc. A significant incident had occurred during Krishna's childhood. People of Vraja were devotees of Indra and used to worship him. Sri Krishna stopped this tradition and encouraged people to worship Govardhan mountain. Indra became extremely furious and caused incessant rain for one week. Sri Krishna protected the people by lifting Govardhan mountain and shielding them from the continuous downpour.At last, Indra accepted defeat and eulogized Sri Krishna.

2.5.15 Killing of Kansa

Continuing with the divine tales of Sri Krishna, Lord Mahadeva told Parvati– When Kansa failed in his repeated attempts to kill Sri Krishna, he instructed 'Akrura' to invite both Krishna and Balaram to Mathura on the pretext of attending a ceremony called Dhanush-yagya. Kansa had planned to kill Sri Krishna by deceitful means.Akrura was a great devotee of Sri Krishna and was aware of Kansa's evil intentions. But, he had no other option but to follow the command of his master-Kansa. So, Akrura went to Vraja where Sri Krishna and Balaram used to live.

Sri Krishna and Balaram were delighted to meet Akrura. After the formal exchange of pleasantaries, Krishna took Akrura to his home. Akrura conveyed the instructions of Kansa to Nanda and requested him to send both Sri Krishna and Balaram to Mathura. Akrura said–'Sri Krishna is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu and Kansa will be killed by him.'Nanda and Yashoda were reluctant to send Sri Krishna to Mathura but Sri Krishna convinced them, Ultimately. Akrura returned to Mathura accompanied by Krishna and Balaram. The people of Vraja became sad when the time for Krishna's departure to Mathura arrived.

When Akrura reached Mathura accompanied by Sri Krishna and Balaram it was already evening. Sri Krishna saw a dyer with colourful apparels going towards Kansa's palace. Sri Krishna playfully demanded some set of clothes from that dyer which he refused to give. Sri Krishna was infuriated and slapped him so

hard that he started vomiting blood. In a short time the dyer was dead. Sri Krishna and Balaram chose some beautiful set of clothes for themselves and proceeded towards the palace of Kansa. After sometime they met a crooked woman carrying 'sandal-wood-paste'. Sri Krishna demanded some sandal wood paste from her, which she gave without any hesitation. Sri Krishna blessed that crooked woman as a result of which she was cured of her physical–deformity.

At last, both Sri Krishna and Balaram reached the oblation–site where 'Dhanush-yagya' was suppossed to be performed. Sri Krishna lifted the divine bow kept there and broke it into two pieces.When Kansa learnt that the divine bow had been broken, he ordered Chaanur to kill Krishna in a wrestling-bout. Kansa also fortified his palace by positioning wild elephants and mighty warriors at all the entrance-points.Sri Krishna and Balaram spent the night at the oblation-site. In the morning both of them proceeded towards the palace. Sri Krishna found an elephant named Kuvalyapeeda standing at the main entrance of the palace. He killed that ferocious elephant without much difficulty.

Sri Krishna and Balaram then entered the gymnasium where wrestling-bouts were supposed to take place. All the demons those who had witnessed Sri Krishna killing that huge elephant without any problem, became terrified and fled away from the gymnasium. Sri Krishna and Balaram entered the chamber of Kansa. Kansa became terrified and ordered his trusted lientenants–Chanur and Mushtik to kill Krishna.Chanur confronted Sri Krishna while Mushtik fought a duel with Balaram. Ultimately, both the demons were killed after a fierce duel. Now, Kansa was left all alone, Sri Krishna pulled Kansa from the throne where he was sitting and slapped him so hard that he fell down on the ground. The injury proved to be fatal and as a result Kansa died. Balaram also killed Kansa's younger brother whose named was Sunama.

After killing Kansa, Krishna and Balaram went to meet their parents–Vasudev and Devaki. They also freed their maternal grandfather- Ugrasena who had been imprisioned by Kansa. At last they appointed Ugrasena as the king of Mathura.

2.5.16 Jarasandh

Jarasandh was the father-in-law of Kansa. When he learnt about Kansa' death he surrounded Mathura with a huge army. Sri Krishna was well aware of Jarasandh's might and bravery. He was also convinced that it would not be easy to defeat Jarasandh. So, he remembered Daruk–his eternal charioteer and sought his help. Daruk appeared with a divine chariot named Sugreeva–pushpak. The chariot was well armed with all the divine weapons of lord Vishnu.

Sri Krishna and Balaram then entered the battlefied mounted on that divine chariot. A fierce battle was fought between Sri Krishna and Jarasandh's army. Jarasandh covered Krishna chariot with his various weapons but Sri Krishna destroyed them with his 'Chakra'. Sri Krishna then destroyed Jarasandh's army by showering volley of arrows from his famous bow–Sharang. Seeing the death and destruction in his army, Jarasandh came forward to fight Balaram.

Balaram attacked Jarasandh with his dangerous weapon–Hala (plough) and destroyed his chariot. Jarasandh fell down on the ground and as Balaram was about to kill him Sri Krishna requested Balaram not to kill Jarasandh. After being defeated, Jarasandh sought the help of Kaalyan, who had a large army. Kaalyavan agreed to help Jarasandh and surrounded Mathura with his army.

Realizing that Mathura was no longer a safe place to live, Sri Krishna shifted the whole population of Mathura to Dwarka and went to fight Kaalyavan. The battle continued for a long period and after realizing that it was not easy to defeat his enemy, Sri Krishna, ran towards the cave where 'Muchkund' had been sleeping since many past eras. Muchkund was blessed with a boon according to which any person upon whom he put his glance after woking from his sleep would die. Krishna hid himself behind Muchkund. Kaalyavan, who was chasing Krishna, entered the cave and kicked Muchkund. Muchkund opened his eyes and saw Kaalyavan. Kaalyavan was burnt to ashes. This way, Sri Krishna was able to defeat his powerful enemy by his cleverness.

2.5.17 Abduction of Rukmini

Lord Mahadeva told Parvati— When Jarasandh learnt about Kaalyavan's death, he attacked Balaram to avenge his friend's death. But, very soon he realized that it was beyond his capacity to defeat Balaram, so he retreated alongwith his army. Sri Krishna and Balaram returned to Dwarka.In course of time, Balaram married Revati–the daugher of Raivat. At that time, there ruled a king named Bheeshmak. He ruled over Vidarbha. He had a beautiful daughter named Rukmini. He also had many sons among whom Rukmi was prominent.

Rukmi wanted Rumini to get married to Shishupal much against her wishes. Rukmini being an incarnation of goddess laxmi rightly wanted o have Sri Krishna as her husband.Rukmini sent a message to Sri Krishna about her brother's intention. Sri Krishna went to help her, accompanied by Balaram.Sri Krishna reached Vidarbha on the same day, Rukmini was supposed to marry Shishupal and abducted her to Dwarka. Jarasandh and Rukmi chased Krishna's chariot but Balaram defeated Jarasandh while Sri Krishna fastened Rukmi with the chariot. Sri Krishna also shaved off Rukmi's hair, which filled him with so much of shame that he decided not to return to Vidarbha.After reaching Dwarka, Sri Krishna married Rukmini on an auspicious day.

2.5.18 Sri Krshna's Queens

Continuing with the divine tales of Sri Krishna, Lord Mahadeva told Parvati–Sri Krishna had 16 thousand queens among whom Satyabhama, Kalindi, Mitravinda, etc. were prominent.King Sattajit had a priceless diamond named–Syamantak, which he had presented to his younger brother–Prasena. Sri Krishna was fascinated by that diamond and demanded it from Prasena, which he refused to part with.

One day, Sri Krishna alongwith Prasena and other yadavas went into the forest for hunting. While chasing a deer, Prasena seceded from his group and was killed by a lion. The lion took the diamond and started playing with it. Incidentally, Jambavan–who had once fought along with Sri Ram against Ravana, saw the lion playing with the diamond. He killed that lion and took the diamond in his possession.

When Sri Krishna returned to Dwarka, he was surprised by a strange rumour, which pervaded the whole city. Some people suspected that Sri Krishna had killed Prasena for the diamond.Sri Krishna was very much distributed by this baseless rumour. To clear the doubts, he went into the forest accompanied by all the residents of Dwarka and showed the dead body of Prasena, which was still lying there. When people saw the mutilated corpse of Prasena, which bore marks of the lion's claws and canines, they became convinced of Sri Krishna's innocense.

While returning back to Dwarka, Sri Krishna saw an effulgent cave. Sri Krishna was very surprised and wanted to find out the source of light. He entered the cave and saw Prasena's diamond hanging on top of a cradle, in which a child was lying. A woman was singing a lulaby so that the child falls asleep—'The lion killed Prasena while Jambavan killed the lion and acquired this diamond from its possession. O child! Don't cry as this priceless diamond belongs to your father.'Sri Krishna furiously blew his conch. Jambavan came out from the cave after listening to the sound of the conch. A fierce duel took place between them, which continued for ten days. At last, Jambavan realized that the person against whom he was fighting was none other than Sri Ram himself. Jambhavan then gave his daughter–Jambavati to Krishna in marriage and gave lot of wealth as dowry including that 'Syamantak' diamond. Bhadraraj had three daughters–Sulakshamana, Nagnajiti and Susheela. Sri Krishna had married all three of them in a 'Swayamwara'. This way, Sri Krishna had altogether eight prominent queen consorts–Rukmini, Satyabhama, Kalindi, Mitravinda, Jambavati, Nagnajiti, Sulakshamana and Susheela.

There lived a mighty demon named Narakasur. He had defeated the deities and snatched the divine earrings of Aditi–the mother of deities. He had created an aerial city in which he lived alongwith other demons. The deities went to Sri Krishna and sought his help. Sri Krishna flew up in the sky mounted on the back of Garuda. Satyabhama was also accompanying him. Sri Krishna was amazed to see the well fortified palace of Narakasur. When the demons saw Srikrishna, they attacked him but Sri Krishna challenged them by blowin his conch. Narakasur came forward to fight Sri Krishna. A fierce battle took place in which Sri Krishna broke Narakasur's bow with his arrows. Ultimately, Sri Krishna was successful in killing Narakasur.

Sri Krishna then returned the whole wealth to the deities, which Narakasur had looted from them. He also liberated sixteen thousand women whom Narakasur

had imprisoned. After being liberated all the women accepted Sri Krishna as their husband.

2.5.19 Anirudha Marries Usha

Lord Mahadeva continued with the divine tales of Sri Krishna–O Parvati! Sri Krishna had a son from Rukmini whose name was 'Aniruddha'. Aniruddha was very brave and had killed a demon named Shambasur. There is an interesting tale how Aniruddha married Usha.

Once, Usha–the daughter of Bangur, saw a very handsome young man in her dreams. She was so infatuated by his handsome personality that she developed a deep desire of marrying him. When she woke up next morning, she expressed her desire to her companion–Chitralekha.Chitralekha was an accomplished painter. She drew a sketch of a handsome man as per the descriptions of Usha. When the painting was ready, Chitralekha revealed to Usha that the preson who she had seen in her dream was none other than Aniruddha.

Chitralekha had divine powers. She went to Dwarka and abducted Aniruddha while he was asleep. She then carried the sleeping Aniruddha and laid him on the bed of Usha.When Usha woke up, She was thrilled to see the man of her dreams. Aniruddha remained there for many days without Banasur being aware of his presence.One day, Banasur came to know about Aniruddhas' presence. He became furious and imprisoned Aniruddha.Sage Narad informed Sri Krishna about Aniruddha's imprisonment. Sri Krishna went to fight a battle against Banasur and release Aniruddha from his imprisonment. Although Sri Krishna was leading a large army and was accompanied by mighty warriors like Baldeva and Pradyumna yet he was aware that it was not easy to fight Banasur who had one thousand arms and whom Lord Shiva had vowed to protect.

A fierce battle commenced between the armies of Sri Krishna and Lord Shiva. But the battle remained indecisive for a long time. Meanwhile, Banasur came forward to fight against Sri Krishna.Very soon Sri Krishna severed all the thousand hands of Banasur with his 'chakra'. Lord Shiva then requested Sri Krishna to spare Banasur's life and said -'Banasur has received the boon of immortality from me. Now, only you can protect the dignity of my boon given to him.' Sri Krishna spared Banasur's life. Banasur then agreed to marry his daughter to Aniruddha. This way Aniruddha married Usha with great fanfare.

2.5.20 The Decline of the Yadu Dynasty

Parvati was listening to the divine tales of Sri Krishna with rapt attention. Lord Mahadeva told Parvati– 'Paundrak was the king of Kashi. He did an austere penance for twelve years to please me. When I appeared before him, he requested me to make his appearance look like Sri Krishna. I blessed him with an appearance similar to that of Sri Krishna. People became confused as to who the real Krishna was.

One day, Narad arrived at Kashi and castigated Paundrak by saying that his intention of befooling people would not meet success as long as real Krishna was alive. Paundrak went to Dwarka with a large army and challenged Sri Krishna for a duel. Sri Krishna severed the impersonator's head with his chakra. Meanwhile, Jarasandh continued to torment the yadavas. Sri Krishna decided to settle the matter for once and all. He advised Bheema to challenge Jarasandh for a wrestling-bout.

Jarasandh and Bheema fought valiantly for 27 days. While both of them were fighting, Sri Krishna signalled Bheema to tear apart Jarasandh's thighs. After the killing of Jarasandh, Sri Krishna released all the kings who had been imprisoned by him. After the great war of Mahabharat had ended, Yudhishthir decided to perform a Rajasuya-yagya at Indraprashth. Sri Krishna also went there to bless the Pandavas. Shishupal was also present at the ceremony. He had an old grudge against Sri Krishna and started abusing him. Initially Krishna tried to overlook his abuses but when situation went beyond repair Sri Krishna severed his head with his chakra.

Dantavaktra attacked Mathura to avenge the death of Shishupal. A long battle was fought at the bank of river yamuna, which continued for many days. Ultimately, Sri Krishna was successful in killing Dantavaktra with his mace. There was a childhood friend of Sri Krishna whose name was Sudama. He was a poor brahmin. Once, he went to meet Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna, being an incarnation of the almighty immediately understood the precarious situation his poor friend was living in. He blessed Sudama as a result of which he got rid of his poverty and became prosperous. Sri Krishna had one crore sons from his sixteen thousand queens. Pradyumna was his eldest son. The yadavas dominated the whole earth and had become arrogant after being intoxicated by their power. There is an interesting tale how this powerful yadava dynasty met their downfall –

Once, some young yadavas played a prank with Sage Kanva, which caused the downfall of the Yadavas. One day, some Yadva children went at the bank of river Narmada where sage Kanva was doing penance. Samba was one of those Yadava children. He disguised himself as a pregnant woman by keeping a pestle under his clothes. All the yadava children then went near Sage Kanva and asked him as to when was the pregnant woman supposed to deliver a child.Sage Kanva furiously cursed them that the whole clan of yadavas would be liquidated because of that very pestle. All the children were scarred and told Sri Krishna about the mistake they had made. Sri Krishna ordered that the iron pestle be crushed to powder and be thrown into a pond. But, that was not the end of the matter, as long reeds grew all around the pond. The reeds had very sharp edges. A fish swallowed a small part of that iron pestle and was subsequently caught by a fowler, who retrieved that iron-piece from the fish and fixed it on the top of his arrow.

In course of time all the Yadavas developed enemity among themselves and

killed each other with those sharp-edged reeds. Once, Sri Krishna was taking rest under the shade of 'Kalpa' tree. The fowler mistook his pink foot to be that of a deer and pierced it with his arrow. When the fowler arrived at the spot he found Sri Krishna in an injured condition. The fowler regretted his action and begged for Sri Krishna's pardon. Sri Krishna consoled the fowler by saying that he had committed no crime. Meanwhile, Daruk arrived there on his chariot. Sri Krishna instructed Daruk to call Arjuna as soon as possible. Arjuna arrived at the site within a short time. Sri Krishna told Arjuna–'The time for my final departure has arrived. Please call all my eight queen consorts.'

Arjuna rushed towards Dwarka to summon the queens but Sri Krishna had already left for his heavenly abode before he could come back with the queens. Arjuna informed the queens about Sri Krishna's injury. In a short time the news spread like a wild fire and all the residents of Dwarka rushed towards the site of incident. After reaching there, the eight queen consorts of Krishna found that their beloved husband had already departed. All of them gave up their lives and united with Sri Krishna. The great Yadavas like Vasudev, Ugrasena and Akrur followed suit. Balaram could not bear the sorrow caused by Sri Krishna's separation and he gave up his life. His wife–Revati entered the burning pyre with her husband's body in her lap. Similarly all the rest of Sri Krishna's family members like Rukmi's daughter, Pradyumna, Usha and Aniruddha left for heavenly abode.

Arjuna performed the last rite of all the dead Yadavas.Eventually, Dwaraka got submerged into the ocean. Thus, Sri Krishna after having liberated the earth from all the sinners left his mortal body. After completing his story Lord Mahadeva told Parvati that Sri Krishna takes incarnation whenever there is predominance of sin or sinners. He also revealed to her that Sri Krishna would incarnate as Kalki at the fag end of Kalkiyuga to liquidate the 'mlechchhas'.

2.5.21 Rituals of Vishnu Worship

Describing about the rituals connected with the worship of lord Vishnu, lord Mahaddeva told Parvati– A devotee can worship Lord Vishnu by making his idol. This mode of worship is known as 'Sthapita' (installation of an idol). There are also some sacred places related with lord Vishnu which are called 'Swayam-Vyakata' (self manifested) like Indradyumna Sarovar, (Kurma sthan), Kashi, Prayag, Dwarka, Naimisharanya, Mathura etc. In all these holy places, Lord Vishnu had manifested himself. A devotee should get up early in the morning and perform 'aachaman'. He should then chant the holy name of Lord Vishnu. He should take his bath and sit down to worship Lord Vishnu.

A devotee should install idols of Laxmi-Narayana on a beautiful pedestal and adorn it with flowers. He should then make offerings of various articles like akshat, fruits, flowers, etc. to the deity. While worshipping, it is most necessary that a devotee followes the rituals as mentioned in the ancient scriptures like Shruti, Smriti, Vedas etc. He should chant the shlokas of Purush-Sukta as well as the cryptic mantra for the accomplishment of 'Shodashopachar'. He should

light a ghee lamp and make offerings of articles like camphor and betel leaves to Lord Vishnu. While making offerings in the sacrificial-fire, chanting of a shloka either from Purushsukta or Shrisukta is madatory.

There are some specific days which are considered to be specially auspicious for the worship of lord Vishnu–Amavasya, Saturday, Solar eclipse, lunar eclipse etc.

2.5.22 Lord Vishnu – The Almighty God

Describing about the superiority of Lord Vishnu among the trinity Gods' Sage Vashishth narrated the following tale–During ancient times, Swayambhuva manu had once gone to Mandarachal mountain to perform a yagya. Many scholars and learned men had come to attend that yagya. Very soon, they got into a debate as to who was the supreme among all the deities. Some of them eulogised the greatness of Brahma, while some said that lord Shiva was the greatest of all the deities. Failing to come to any conclusion all of them requested Sage Bhrigu to find out as to who was the greatest among the trinity Gods.

Sage Bhrigu went to meet Lord Shiva at Kailash mountain. He saw Nandi standing guard at the main entrance. Sage Bhrigu arrogantly ordered Nandi to inform Lord Shiva of his arrival. Nandi refused to comply with Bhrigu's command. Sage Bhrigu cursed Lord Shiva by saying–Your master- Shiva, would bear the consequences of showing disrespect to me. From today onwards people would make offerings of forbidden articles to him.'

Sage Bhrigu then went to meet Lord Brahma. After reaching Brahmaloka, he made salutations to lord Brahma.Lord Brahma also did not give any respect to Sage Bhrigu and neglected him. Sage Bhrigu became furious and cursed Lord Brahma—'Being intoxicated by your Rajoguna, you have shown disrespect to me. From today onwards people will not worhsip you.' Sage Bhrigu then went to meet Lord Vishnu at his abode- Ksheersagar. He did not have any problem in reaching the place where Lord Vishnu was taking rest on Sheshnag, engrossed in his yoganidra. Goddess Laxmi was pressing Vishnu's legs with total devotion. Sage Bhrigu kicked Lord Vishnu on his chest. Lord Vishnu woke up and seeing sage Bhrigu said—'O Great Brahmin! Your tender foot must have got hurt because of my chest, which is as hard as Vajra. How blessed I am to have been touched by a brahmin's foot.'

Lord Vishnu got up and eulogised Sage Bhrigu. This gesture of Lord Vishnu made Sage Bhrigu cry in joy. Now, he was convinced as to who was the supreme among all the three deities.Sage Bhrigu returned to Mandarachal mountain where all the sages were anxiously waiting for him. He declared–

'Lord Brahma is the possesser of Rajoguna, while Lord Shiva possesses tamoguna. Only Lord Vishnu is the proud possessor of Satvaguna and hence He is the supreme among all three of them.' After finishing his tale, Sage Vashishth

told the sages that anybody who worships Lord Vishnu with complete faith and total devotion become liberated from all his sins. A devotee of Lord Vishnu attains to Vishnu Loka after his death.

2.5.23 Parashuram

Describing Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Parshuram, Lord Mahadeva told Parvati--Sage Jamadagni came from the lineage of Bhrigu. He had pleased Indra by his tremendous penance and received Surabhi cow in return. In course of time he married the daughter of king Renuk whose name was Renuka. A child was born to them, who was named 'Ram' by Sage Bhrigu. The child was also known as 'Jamadganya' because of Jamdagni.

After growing up, Ram became proficient in all the scriptures. He also mastered various weaponaries. One day, the king of Haihaya named Arjun arrived at the hermitage of Jamadagni. Sage Jamdagni treated the king with due honour and respect. He presented numerous gifts to the king. Arjun wanted nothing else but the Surabhi–cow from Sage Jamdagni which he was unwilling to part away with. Ultimately, Arjun forcibly took away the divine cow. The cow was unwilling to go alongwith Arjun and she attacked his army with her sharp horns. As a result, Arjun's whole army was liquidated within no time.The revengeful Arjun killed Jamadagni. At the time of this incident. Ram was not present in the hermitage.

Ram wanted to avenge his father's death and did a tremendous penance to please Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu became pleased by his devotion and presented many divine weapons to him. The weapons included the famous axe–Parshu and Vaishnav-bow. After acquiring Parshu from Lord Vishnu, Ram became famous as Parshuram. He had vowed to kill all the Kshatriyas, which he did only, the clan of Ikshavaku was spared by him as he had promised his mother that he would not harm Ikshavaku and his clan.

After freeing the earth from the terror of Kshatriyas, Parshuram performed an Ashwamedha yagya and donated his whole kingdom, to the brahmins. He then went to do penance at the hermitage of Nar-Narayan.

END OF PADMA PURAN

3 Vishnu Purana

This Purana has 6 Chapters (6 Parts) as follows:
Part 1: Describes the creation of the universe, birth of the gods and the demons, Pralaya, churning of the sea, tales of the devotee Dhruva; killing of Hiranyakashipu etc.

Part 2: Contains the description of Priyavrata's sons and Bharat dynasty. It also has a geographical description of Jambu dweep, Bharat varsh, Shatdweep, Patal (the hades), the sun and the planets, chariot of the sun, origin of the Ganges etc.

Part 3: Contains a detailed description of Manavantaras, Kalpa, Veda Vyasa, religion and the caste system etc. It also has a description of the origin of Buddhism.

Part 4: Origin of Brahmanand Daksha etc. Birth of Pururava, marriage of Balarama with Revati. Birth of Ikshavaku. Kukutstha dynasty. Tale of Yuvanashva and Saubhari. Sarpvinasha mantra. A Narayana dynasty, Birth of Sagar. Ashwamedha by Sagar. Descendence of the Ganges through the penance of Bhagirath. Birth of Lord Rama. Yagya of Vishwamitra, birth of Sita, tales of Chandra dynasty. Abduction of Tara, Origin of Agnitrayo, birth of Dhanvantri and his clan. Wars with the demons, clan of Nahush, tale of Yayati, Yadu dynasty. Birth of Kartveerya Arjun.

Tales of Krishna's birth, marriage of Krishna with Jambvanti and Satyabhama. Salvation of Shishupaal. Over population of Yaduvanshis. Birth of Karna and his find him by Adhirath. Janamejaya dynasty and origin of Bharat. Clans of Jahnu and Pandu. Clan of Parikshit and royal dynasties of the future. Future generation of Ikshvaku dynasty. Future generation of Brihad dynasty. Future generations of Pradyot dynasty. Kingdom of Nand. Advent of Kali Yuga and description of royal dynasties of Kali Yuga.

Part 5: Marriage of Vasudev and Devaki. Incarnation of Lord Vishnu to kill Kansa. Arrival of Yagmaya in Yashoda womb and of the Lord in Devaki's womb. Birth of Lord Krishna, carrying of Krishna to Gokul, Dialogue of Mahamaya with Kansa, acquiring of defensive stance by Kansa. Releasing of Vasudeva and Devaki. Killing of Putana. Killing of Shakat. Naming of Krishna and Balarama. Humiliation of Kaliya. Killing of Dhenukasura, killing of Pralamb, description of festival devoted to Indra, worshipping of Govardhana, arrival of Indra, killing of Arishtakasura. Arrival of Narad in Kansa's court. Killing of Keshi, Arrival of Akrur in Vrindavana. Arrival of Lord Krishna in Mathura. Lord Krishna's mercy on Kubja. Arrival of Lord Krishna in amphi-theatre and killing of Kansa.

Coronation of Ugrasena, bringing of Sudharma in Mathura, defeat of Jarasandha, birth of Kalayavan, killing of Kalayavan. Vrindavan tour by

Balarama, getting of Varuni by Balarama. Abduction of Rukmani, abduction of Pradyumna, getting of Pradyumna by Mayavati, killing of Shambar by Pradyumna, killing of Rukmi by Balarama, getting of sixteen thousand queens by Lord Krishna. Abduction of Parijat. Fight with Indra. Begging for pardon by Indra. Migration to Dwarka, bow battle. Telling of dream by Usha, abduction of Aniruddha, fight with Lord Shiva, amputation of Bana by Lord Krishna, killing of Kashiraj Paundraka. Putting of Varanasi on flames. Abduction of Lakshmana. Presentation of Samb before the sages as an expecting mother. Origin of pestle. Destruction of Yadu vansha. Ascendence of Lord Krishna to heaven, beginning of Kali Yuga, preaching of Arjun by Vyasa. Coronation of Parikshit.

Part 6: Description of religion in Kali Yuga. Description of the importance of Kali Yuga, Shudra and women folk by Vyasa. Description of Kalpa. Description of a day of Brahma. Position of Brahma in Pralaya. Natural disasters. Different kinds of sorrows. Torturing in hell. Awakening of Brahma, Preaching of Yoga. Tale of Keshidhwaja. Killing of the religion and the cow. Holding of counsel by Khandikya. Self knoweldge. Ridicules of body-spiritualism. Querries of Yoga. Brahmagyana (Vedas). Concepts of tangible-intangible appearances of God. Salvation of Khandikya and Keshidhwaja. Excellence of Vishnu Purana. Virtues of Lord Vishnu's names. Results of hearing Lord's name.

3.1 Chapter 1 (Part 1)

This chapter contains 16 sections.

NAARAAYANAM NAMASKRUTAM NARAM CHAIV NAROTTAMAM |
DEVEEM SARASWATEEM VYAASAM TATO JAYMUDEERYET ||

3.1.1 Introduction and Origin of the Universe from Basic Elements

Sage Parashar, the exponent of Vishnu Puraan had narrated this grand treatise to Maitreya. Sage Suta inherited it from Maitreya. The text presented here is a narration by Suta.

Suta says- One day, Maitreya greeted sage Parashar and said- "Gurudev, you have studied all the scriptures. I wish to hear the tale of universe's origin from you. How will be the ages that are about to come? What is the reason for this whole creation? Who created it? Where did it exist? Whom did it mingle with? And with whom it will annihilate eventually? Apart from these, I also wish to hear about the expansion of fathomless sky, origin of ocean and mountains, origin of earth, expansion of the Sun, division of time in four ages, Pralay, religion, sages, kings, creation of Vedas by Vedavyasa, origin of four classes in our society and system of four Ashrams in one's life."

Parashar says: "Maitreya, you have reminded me today of the description once made by my grandfather Vashishta. When I learnt that the monster, which was created by Vishwamitra, had devoured my father, I grew quite angry and started a Yagya to destroy all the monsters. The Yagya destroyed such a large number

of monsters that the whole race began to face the fear of extinction. My grandfather consoled me that too much anger was not good and that all the monsters could not be blamed for my father's death. According to my grandfather my father was sure to face such a fate ultimately. Only the fools get angry. A human being bears the fruit of his deeds himself. O son! Anger destroys all the virtues of penance. Hence, ascetics always shun anger. Hence, stop this Yagya for forgiving has always been the virtue of ascetics."

Thus, convinced by my grandfather, I stopped the Yagya. At the same time, Brahma's son, Pulastya, arrived there and said- "Despite your anger, you forgave the monsters when convinced by your grandfather Vashishta. You will learn all the scriptures and give commentaries on Puraans. You will also learn the real appearance of the gods". Vashishta also endorsed these words of Pulastya.

"O Maitreya! Now I narrate to you, the whole contents of Puraan. This whole universe has originated from Lord Vishnu. It is existing within Him and will annihilate in Him eventually."

Parashar says: "The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh is also known as the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. All of them salve the devotees. All of them have equal importance. Still, preserver who fosters and protects all the living beings is far more significant. I salute to Him and narrate the tale that was once narrated by Brahma to all the Dakshas. Dakshas had narrated this tale to the King Purukutsa at the bank of the river Narmada. In turn, Purukutsa narrated this tale to Saraswat who narrated it to me."

"O Brahmin! Lord is eternal and endless. Hence, origin of universe, its existence and annihilation are also unending processes. During the period of Pralay, the nature exists in a state of equilibrium. It is during this period that Purush (masculine forces of creation) separates from Prakriti (feminine forces of creation) and Kaalroop of Vishnu (eternal, unending form of the Lord) is manifested. Lord Vishnu is beyond all the bonding of life like birth, growth, intelligence, senses, decay and death. Purush is the first appearance of Lord Vishnu. Prakriti is the manifestation of His action while Kaalroop is His supreme appearance."

During the Pralay, there was neither day nor night, neither earth nor sky and neither darkness nor light. At the subsidence of Pralay, with His desire, the Lord entered the Purush who is beyond all bonding. His entry stimulated the process of creation. First of all, a single great element originated encompassing all the other lesser elements. From this great element originated three egos- Sattvic, Rajas and Taamas. Taamas created sky with sound as the main virtue. The sky then created the sense of touch. Touch produced air. Hence, touch is the main feature of air; no one can see air but only have an experience of it through touch. Air created Roop, which gave birth to fire with Roop as its main virtue. Fire gave birth to taste. Taste produced water with taste as its main property. From water originated scent, which produced earth with scent as the main

feature. These senses have no special expression.

The ego Rajas produced ten sense organs whereas the ruling deities of these organs were produced by Sattvic ego. Thus, the ten deities who rule ten sense organs and the eleventh entity mind are Sattvic in nature. Skin, eyes, ears, nose and tongue- these five organs aid the mind in its function. O Maitreya! Anus, sex organs, hands, legs and speech organs are the five organs that help in action. Works like excretion, reproduction, movement and speech are carried out with the help of these five organs. All the five elements like sky, air, fire, water and earth are full of emotions. Hence, they are also known to have a special significance.

All these elements have different and distinct powers. Without their combination, creation of the universe was impossible. In the beginning, all these elements were present in the great ball or egg, which came into existence because of the inspiration of the Lord. As this ball increased in size, it formed the base as Prakriti in which, Lord Vishnu Himself entered as Hiranyagarbh.

When the universe comes into existence, Lord Vishnu fosters it till the end of Kalpa. At the end of Kalpa, Lord Vishnu Himself devours the entire physical elements in Rudra appearance. During that time, He inundates the entire universe and Himself sleeps on Shesha in Ksheersagar. When he awakes once again, He begins the process of creation in the appearance of Brahma.

3.1.2 Birth of Brahma and Salvation of Earth by Varaha

At the end of the previous Kalpa, when Brahma awakened from his long slumber, he saw all the worlds devoid of everything. With a desire to salve the earth from the depth of unfathomable inundation, He took the appearance of Varaha. Entering the water, He reached Paataaloka. Seeing Him, the earth prayed Him with respect. Hearing her prayers, the Lord roared with frightening sound. Then, He supported the earth on His great incisors and came out from the abysmal depth. When He was rising, His breath produced big sprays of water, which drenched sinless sages while the force of His breath frightened common creatures. When the Lord emerged from the water, all the sages prayed Him with reverence and respect.

Very soon, the Lord installed the earth at a position far above the unending stretches of water. Then, Lord carved out the topographical features on earth and divided it into many divisions and created all the four worlds. Then Lord Vishnu in the guise of Brahma carried out the process of creation.

As soon as Brahma thought of creation, Tamoguni (full of darkness) creatures were the first to appear. Absence of knowledge and presence of evils like attachment, anger etc. were the main virtues of these creatures. These creatures include lower organisms, trees, shrubs, creepers, plants and grasses. These together constitute the primitive world. Their creation was followed by the appearance of animals and birds, which are devoid of wisdom and are full of

ego. They are also unaware of the nature of another organism of their status.

Still unsatisfied with His creation, Lord created the next world, which has a somewhat elevated position. The living beings that were produced in this world had internal and external knowledge, power of reflection and loved physical comforts. Though this creation pleased the Lord, He was still unsatisfied. So He created the next world, which was situated at a somewhat lower position. This new world had excess of all the three virtues. Human beings populate this world and because of excess of vices, they are full of sorrow but at the same time, highly active, have internal and external knowledge and are able to attain their goals.

The first few creations had resulted from the thoughts of the Lord. For the creation of the gods, the demons, Pitraganas, human beings and water, the Lord decided to use His body. Thus, the demons were the first to emerge from His thighs. The Lord then shed His dark body, which formed the night. Then from His mouth, the Lord produced the gods who had Sattvic virtues. The Lord then shed His Sattvic body as well from which the day came into being. It is also the reason why the gods acquire more strength in day and the demons are stronger during nights. Then the Lord acquired yet another body and behaved like Pitraganas to produce Pitraganas before shedding that body too, which gave rise to the dusk- the twilight between the day and the night. Thereafter, the Lord acquired a new body with Rajas virtue from which the human beings were produced. When the Lord shed that Rajas body it formed dawn- the twilight between the night and the day. It also explains why the human beings are stronger at dawn and Pitraganas at dusk.

Then the Lord assumed yet another body with Rajas virtues and produced desire from it. The desire gave birth to lust. Staying in the darkness then, the Lord created the world, which is full of desire and lust. In that world, many ugly looking human beings, who had long beard and moustache appeared and ran towards Him. Among those who said, ‘Protect him’ came to be known as Raakshas (demons) and those who said, ‘We will eat him’ came to be known as Yakshas. Then the angry Lord produced aggressive carnivores. Thereafter, the singing Lord produced Gandharvas. Thus, by turns, the Lord produced birds, sheep, goat, cow, horse, elephant, donkey, deer, camel, pony from His age, chest, mouth, belly and feet respectively. From the innumerable body hair of the Lord, fruits, flowers and herbs were produced. From His east-facing head, Lord produced Gayatri mantra, Rigveda, and Yagyas. From His south-facing head, He produced Yajurveda. From west-facing head, He produced Samaveda and from His north-facing head, He produced Atharvaveda.

3.1.3 Divisions of Earth and Origin of Cereals

With the desire of creating the world, Brahma produced different kinds of human beings from his different organs. Thus, from his mouth, Brahmins appeared. Kshatriyas appeared from his chest, Vaishyas from his thighs and from his feet, Shudras appeared. Thus, physical body is the greatest means for

human beings in order to achieve his goals. With time, the human beings lost their divine virtues and perfections. Jealousy, sorrow, decay and infighting began to rise among the people. In order to earn their livelihood and run their life peacefully, the human beings developed agriculture and other handicrafts.

"O sage! Paddy, barley, wheat, lesser cereals, sesame, millet, rice, peas, pulses, beans, rye, gram and hemp are common agricultural produce that have edible as well as medicinal values in the villages. These and other produce are also used as oblations in the Yagyas because all of them have produced as a result of Yagyas. Performing Yagyas daily is the most virtuous exercise that every human being should undertake. This destroys the sins committed by common people."

3.1.4 Birth of Prajapatis and their Progeny

At one point, the process of creation got saturated and no increase took place in the number of living beings. Then, with a desire of continuing the creation, Lord created nine sages from His thought. Then he produced nine daughters and handed them over as the wives to those nine sages.

When initially produced sons of Brahma took to asceticism, He got very much infuriated. His anger was enough to burn all the three worlds. From this anger, Rudra originated who was shining like the Sun. Rudra had appeared in half-masculine and half-feminine form. Immediately after His appearance, Rudra separated His body into eleven male parts and eleven female parts.

Then Swayambhu Manu appeared from the body of Brahma. He agreed to follow Brahma’s dictate of continuing creation. He got a woman Shatrupa who had also appeared along with him. Together they begot two sons, Priyavrata and Utaanpaad and two daughters, Prasooti and Aakooti. These two daughters were married to Daksha and Prajapati respectively.

Prajapati and Aakooti gave birth to twins, Yagya and Dakshina. Yagya and Dakshina got married and produced twelve sons who later on came to be known as Yaam, the gods.

Daksha and Prasooti produced twenty-four daughters, thirteen of which were married to Dharma. The remaining eleven daughters were married to Bhrigu, Shiva, Marichi, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Atri, Vashishta, Agni and Pitars.

From his thirteen wives, Dharma produced Kama, Darpa, Niyam, Santosh, Lobha, Shrut, Dand, Naya, Vinay, Bodh, Vyavasaay, Kshema, Sukh and Yash. Kama got married to Rati and produced Harsh. Darpa married Hinsa and produced a son Anrit and a daughter Nikriti. Anrit and Nikriti got married and produced Bhaya and Narak and their wives Maya and Vedana. Maya produced Mrityu, the destroyer of all the creatures in the world. Vedana produced a son, Dukh. Mrityu produced Vyadhi, Jara, Shok, Trishna and Krodh. These are all the fierce appearances of Lord Vishnu and cause Pralay.

The omnipresent eternal God creates this world in the form of Manus, protects it and ultimately destroys it. There are four kinds of Pralay- Naimittik, Prakritik, Aatyantik and Nitya. Among them, Naimittik is Brahma Pralay during which God takes a nap. During Prakritik Pralay, the universe annihilates in nature. Annihilation of Yogi in the Supreme Being is Aatyantik Pralay and a decay of physical elements that continues day and night is Nitya Pralay.

3.1.5 Creation of Rudra and Omnipresence of Laxmi

In the beginning of Kalpa when Brahma was thinking about a son, who would be like him in virtues, a boy with reddish-blue body appeared in his lap. Brahma addressed the boy with names like Rudra, Bhava, Shiv, Ibhaan, Pashupati, Bheema, Ugra and Mahadev. Brahma also fixed Surya, water, earth, air, fire, sky, Dikshit (graduate scholar) Brahmin and the Moon His abode. Since then, all these things idolise Shiv. These eleven idols of Shiv have wives like Suvarchala, Usha, Vikeshi, Apara, Shiva, Swaha, Disha and Rohini. Shanaishchar, Shukra, Lohitaang, Manojav, Skand, Sarg, Santaan and Buddh are the sons of these idols respectively. Rudra Himself got Sati, the daughter of Daksha Prajapati as His wife. Sati had committed self-immolation because of the disrespect that her father had shown for her husband. In her next birth, she had appeared as Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya and Maina. Parvati too got married to Shiv. Khyaati got married to Bhrigu and gave birth to two sons Dhata and Vidhaata and a daughter Lakshmi. Lakshmi then married Lord Vishnu.

Maitreya says - "O sage! It is heard that Lakshmi was produced from Ksheersagar during the churning of the sea but you say that Lakshmi was the daughter of Bhrigu and Khyaati. How is it possible?"

Parashar says- "O great Brahmin! Lakshmi who never separates from the Lord is Herself eternal like Him. But still, as you have expressed your doubt, I will narrate you the real story."

The famous short-tempered sage Durvaasa is a partial incarnation of Shankar. One day, he was wandering on the earth when all of a sudden, he happened to see an extremely divine beauty. She was wearing a garland of beautiful flowers. The sage requested the beauty to give him that garland. She presented the garland respectfully to the sage. The sage adorned the garland on his head and began to wander again. Right at that moment, he saw Indra riding on Airaavat and going somewhere in the procession of the gods. Instinctively, sage Durvaasa put that garland around the neck of Indra but Indra removed it and put it on Airaavat’s head. Airaavat pulled the garland with his trunk and smashed it on the ground. This whole sequence of events infuriated Durvaasa who cursed Indra. "O Indra! You are so inebriated with your luxuries that you dared to insult my humble gift. Hence, all your splendour shall be destroyed. You will lose all your wealth."

Indra at once descended from the elephant and began to request sage

Durvaasa. Durvaasa said- "Indra! Forgiveness has no place in my personality. So, all your repenting is meaningless." Saying this, sage Durvaasa departed from the scene and Indra to left for Amravati.

Very soon, the curse began to show its influence. With the loss of Indra’s luxuries, all the verdancy on the earth too began to wane. Hermits too began to give up Yagyas. All the human beings began to be guided by greed and gave up pious virtues. And at a place where pious virtues have no room, Lakshmi too doesn’t stay there.

She made her abode in the abysmal depth of the sea. Very soon, the demons launched an attack on the gods and drove them out of heaven. Indra along with other gods approached Brahma and told him the whole thing. Brahma suggested them to take refuge at Lord Vishnu. He assured them also that Lord Vishnu would definitely protect them. Brahma even accompanied the gods to Lord Vishnu. There, they together prayed Lord Vishnu and intimated Him about their ordeal.

Pleased by their prayers, Lord Vishnu appeared before them and said- "I will definitely help you regain your splendour. Presently, do what I say. You reconcile with the demons and convince them to carry out the churning of the sea. Then bring all kinds of herbs and put them in the sea. With the help of the demons and using Mandaraachal as churner and Vaasuki, the Naag as the rope to carry out the churning of the sea. Thus, you will recover ambrosia drinking which, all of you will become immortal and regain your strength."

Following the advice of Lord Vishnu, the gods reconciled with the demons and convinced them to carry out the churning of the sea. They together procured all kinds of herbs and put them in the sea. Then they began the churning using Mandaraachal Mountain. As soon as the churning began, Mandaraachal began to sink. Lord Vishnu took incarnation of Kachchhap (the great tortoise) and bore the weight of the mighty mountain on His back. During the churning, Kamadhenu, the wishful cow was the first to emerge. It was presented to the sages as an aid for their Yagyas. It was followed by the damsel, Vaaruni, Kalpavriksha (the wishful tree) after which, beautiful elves appeared. The Moon followed the elves and was taken up by Shiva on His forehead. During the churning, huge quantity of poison had also emerged. It was drunk by Lord Shiva and some parts of it were taken up by the serpents. In the end, Dhanvantari himself emerged from the sea carrying the urn of ambrosia.

It was during the churning itself that Lakshmi appeared once again from the sea holding lotuses in her hands. All the sages prayed her. Then taking bath with divine water, goddess Lakshmi took her seat in the heart of Lord Vishnu.

When the demons saw that Lakshmi had chosen Lord Vishnu’s heart as her abode, they got perplexed. They at once snatched the urn from Dhanvantari and ran away. Then a row broke out among them over the drinking of ambrosia.

Each of the demons wanted to drink ambrosia in maximum quantity. Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu also arrived there in the guise of an extremely pretty woman Mohini and took possession of the urn. Mohini had pleased the demons with her sweet smile while distributing ambrosia among the gods.

Thus, the gods came to drink ambrosia. When at last, the demons realised that they had been cheated they immediately attacked the gods. But since the gods had regained their strength, they soon defeated the demons without much ado. Afterwards, the gods prayed Lord Vishnu and returned to heaven to rule it. The world also regained its verdancy. After regaining his splendour, comforts and luxuries of the heaven, Indra prayed goddess Lakshmi with devotion and respect.

Pleased by the prayers of Indra, Lakshmi asked him to seek a boon. Indra said- "O goddess! If you are pleased with me, kindly bless me with a boon that first you will never desert this world and also that you will never desert those who worship you with this prayer." Lakshmi granted these boons.

Thus, Lakshmi had appeared as the daughter of Bhrigu and his wife Khyaati. Then second time, she emerged from beneath the sea during its churning. Thus, whenever Lord Vishnu takes an incarnation, Lakshmi accompanies Him. When God appears in divine form, she too takes a divine appearance. When God appears in human form, Lakshmi appears in human form also.

3.1.6 Dhruv’s Migration to the Forest

Swayambhu Manu had two sons- Priyavrata and Utaanpaad. Utaanpaad had two wives- Suruchi and Suniti. Suruchi had a son- Uttam while Suniti had also a son- Dhruv. King Utaanpaad loved Suruchi more than he loved Suniti.

One day the king was sitting on the throne. Prince Uttam was playing in his lap. Meanwhile Dhruv also arrived there and insisted to play in the lap of his father. At his insistence, queen Suruchi ridiculed that as he was not born to her he had no right to the king’s love, ... "so your insistence is useless. Though you are also a son of this king but this throne belongs to my son. Don’t you know that you have been born to Suniti."

Getting angry over his stepmother’s ridicules, Dhruv went to his mother. Suniti consoled her son and enquired about the reason for his anger. Dhruv narrated the whole thing to his mother. Suniti too got perplexed and said: "O son! Suniti speaks the truth but you don’t worry for no one can do away the virtues of your deeds that you performed in your previous birth. Hence you should not feel sorry over such petty things. If you feel really sorry by the words of your stepmother why don’t you try to gather virtues? Why don’t you try to be a gentle and altruistic person?"

Thus consoled by mother Dhruv said- "Mother! Since now onwards, I will do every such thing so that I may attain the most respected position in the world. I

am no longer desirous of getting a position granted by others. I will achieve the same position as my father has." Saying this Dhruv left the palace and the town and reached a dense forest.

Seven Munishwars (mendicants) were already present in the forest. Dhruv greeted them all and said very politely- "O great sages! I am the prince Dhruv. King Utaanpaad is my father and his younger queen Suniti is my mother. I have arrived here out of desperation." The sages said- "O prince! You are just a small boy. You have no reason to be worried because your father is still alive and neither you have any disease. What then caused you such a severe desperation?"

Dhruv narrated the whole events and also that how his stepmother Suruchi ridiculed about his inferior position in the palace. The sages said- "O prince! Kindly tell us whatever you have decided to do to change your destiny and also tell us if we can help you in any way."

Dhruv said-"O sages! I neither long for wealth or for the kingdom. I simply long to enjoy such a position that nobody have ever enjoyed earlier. Kindly help me and guide me what I should do to attain such a position."

Marichi said-"O prince! Nobody can attain such an unparalleled position without the worship of Govind (an epithet of Lord Vishnu), so you also worship that eternal Supreme Being." Atri said- "He who is far above the tangible can only satisfy Him and bring you that supreme position."

Angira said-"Go and worship Govind who holds the entire universe within Him."

Pulastya said-"Even the wretched people attain the rare salvation worshipping Hari."

Pulaha said-"Go and worship that Vishnu worshipping whom even Indra attained the position of the gods' king."

Kratu said- "Go and worship Janardana who is supreme, who is deity of the Yagyas and Yagya Himself."

Vashishta said-"O son! You will attain whatever you wish by worshipping Lord Vishnu."

Dhruv said - "O sages! At my prayers all of you told me about whom I should worship. Now kindly tell me what should I do to please the Lord."

The sages said- "It is imperative for a person, who wishes to worship Lord Vishnu that first of all, he should expel all other menial thoughts from his mind and replace them with the contemplation Lord alone. O prince! Thus concentrate on that omnipotent eternal Lord with the mantra - 'OM NAMO

BHAGWATE VAASUDEVAAY' . Your grandfather Swayambhu Manu had himself recited this mantra during the previous age and had received the perfection of his desire from the Lord. So you too go and recite the same mantra in order to please Lord Vishnu."

3.1.7 Dhruv Pleases God with his Penance

The prince Dhruv greeted the sages and continued on his journey. At last, he reached a beautiful forest Madhuvan on the bank of the river Yamuna. It was the same forest, which was later occupied by a demon Madhu. Shatrughana, the youngest brother of Lord Rama had killed the demon Lavan, the son of Madhu in the same forest and founded the township of Mathura. In the same forest, prince Dhruv decided to carry out his penance. As per the dictate of the sages, he began to recite the mantra continuously.

Very soon, the earth began to move because of Dhruv's severe penance. Even the seat of Indra could not remain stable. A stampede resulted among the gods. The gods then hatched a conspiracy to disturb the penance.

According to the plan an illusionary image of Suniti, Dhruv's mother appeared before him and pleaded - "O son! Please stop this severe penance that is bound to decay your body. I got you after great desires and worship. It is not proper for you to take your stepmother's words so seriously and desert your real mother. You are my only support. You are only four or five years old. Presently you should pay more attention to your plays and studies. Why are you observing such a severe penance then? O son! If you don't give up your penance right now I will give my life." But Dhruv was so much sunk in the contemplation of Lord Vishnu that he did not hear the wailing of his mother."

His mother then said- "Run, O son! Run away to save your life. Look! Formidable demons are approaching. They are carrying lethal weapons." Suddenly that illusionary image blew out intense fire from her mouth. That fire took appearance of many dreadful monsters, who were shouting loudly like 'kill him', 'eat him'. Those monsters bore the heads of lion, camel, crocodile etc. and appeared extremely formidable. The monsters were roaring loudly.

But Dhruv's mind was deeply in contemplation. He neither saw the monsters or heard the noises made by them. Thus, seeing their all attempts failed. The gods decided to take refuge at Lord Vishnu. There they said- "O Lord! We have come to you perplexed by the severe penance of Dhruv the son of Utaanpaad. His penance is increasing like a waxing Moon. We are not sure if he desires for the position of Indra, Surya, Kuber, Varun or any other deity. But kindly remove our fears."

Assuring the gods, the Lord said- "That boy has no desire for attaining the position of any deity. But I will definitely grant him whatever he desires. But all of you need not worry." The gods greeted the Lord and returned.

Ultimately pleased by the severe penance of Dhruv, Lord Vishnu appeared before him in his formal four-armed form and said- "Dhruv! May it all be well for you. I am very much pleased with you." Hearing these words Dhruv opened his eyes and to his amazement found Lord Vishnu standing before him. For a moment he did not believe his eyes. Standing before him was the same Lord Vishnu whom he used to see in contemplation. For a moment, Dhruv forgot how to pray God. He then took refuge of God and said- "O Lord! If you are pleased with me, kindly bless me with power to pray you. My mind is exhilarated with devotion for you. It wishes to pray you." Hearing these words the Lord touched Dhruv with His conch and as soon as it happened, an unbinding stream of devotional prayer sprang from Dhruv's mouth.

At the completion of the prayer Lord Vishnu said- "O son! Your penance succeeds with my sight but my presenting a sight should also not go waste. So seek a boon of your desire." Dhruv said- "O Lord! Nothing is hidden from your divine sight. I started this severe penance out of desperation caused by the harsh words of my stepmother. She had ridiculed my insistence of playing in my father's lap saying that as I was not born to her, I had no right to the king's love. Hence, O Lord! I wish to attain such a position that could be the base of the entire universe."

Lord said- "O son! You were born in a Brahmin family in your previous birth. Then you had pleased me by your abidance to the religion. You were also a friend of a prince and wished to enjoy the same royal luxuries that your friend was enjoying. You had in fact wished to be a prince. Hence O son! You are born as a prince in this birth. It is rare to get a place in the lineage of Swayambhu Manu. But this honour has no value for a devotee like you. O son! I will definitely accord you the position that is excellent among all the three worlds. In future you will be the base of all the planets and all the constellations. I grant you a fixed position that is far above the Sun, the Moon, the planets, constellations, Saptarishis and all the gods who fly about in divine aircraft. Besides it, you will stay there for a complete Kalpa whereas even the gods do not stay in their position more than a single Manvantara. Your mother Suniti too will come to stay with you as a bright star for the same period of time. There she will stay on an aircraft. People will see you with faith for you will show them the right direction."

Thus receiving a boon from Lord Vishnu, Dhruv occupied a fixed position in the northern sky. Even the sage like Shukracharya praises Dhruv that how fortunate he is.... that even Saptarishis go around him? That pivotal position of Dhruv would continue even in the ages to come.

3.1.8 Tale of King Ven and Prithu

Parashar says- " With the help of Dhruv, his wife gave birth to two sons- Sishti and Bhavya. Sishti had five sons- Ripu, Ripunjay, Vipra, Vikal and Vrikteja. Ripu had a brilliant son Chaakshush. Chaakshush had a son Manu. Manu had sons- Puru, Kuru, Shatadyumna, Tapasvi, Satyavaan, Suchi, Agnishtome, Atiraatra,

Sudyumna and Abhimanyu. Kuru had sons- Anga, Suman, Khyaati, Kratu, Angira and Shivi. Anga had a son named Ven. The sages had churned the right hand of Ven to produce a son named Vainya. He later on became renowned as Prithu. He had even milked the earth for the benefit of his subjects."

Maitreya says- "Why did the sages churn Ven's hand? What was their purpose of getting Prithu?"

Parashar says- "Mrityu had his first child as a daughter named Sunitha who was married to Anga. Sunitha had given birth to Ven. Ven had all the faults of his maternal grandfather Mrityu and hence was devil-like in nature." At the time of his coronation, Ven had declared- "I am the God and the Yagyapurush. Hence, in future, no one shall perform Yagyas and donate Dakshina." The sages praised him and said- "O king! We speak about the benefit of you and your subjects. Through grand Yagyas, we shall worship omnipotent Lord Hari. Thus pleased, he will grant all your desires. O king! In the kingdom of which kings, Lord Hari is worshipped as the presiding deity of Yagyas, He fulfils all their desires."

Ven said- "Who is greater than me and even venerable, whom you regard as the presiding deity of the Yagyas? All the deities like Brahma; Vishnu, Mahesh, Indra, Vayu etc. are present in the body of the king. Hence, the king has all the virtues of these deities. Therefore, do what I say. Such as a woman's duty is to serve her husband, similarly it is your duty of all of you to obey my dictate."

The sages tried to convince Ven repeatedly but in vain. At last, when he did not agree to their proposal, the sages killed him. Immediately after killing the king, the sages saw the clouds of dust rising all around. It was revealed to them upon enquiry that the subjects of a king-less kingdom have resorted to plundering and looting each other and it was because of that stampede that clouds of dust were rising.

The sages then churned the thighs of issue-less king and produced an ugly black man. He was feeling excited and asked the sages what he should do? The sages asked him to Nishid (sit down); hence he came to be known as Nishaad. His progeny came to be known as Nishaadgana. Appearance of Nishaad did away with all the sins of Ven. The sages then churned Ven's right hand and produced prowessive Prithu whose body was radiating like fire. As soon as he appeared, bow and arrow and shield of Lord Shiva descended from heaven and all the subjects felt extreme joy. With the birth of such a pious son, Ven attained a position in the heaven.

For the coronation of Prithu, Brahma himself had appeared there with the water from all the rivers and oceans, all kinds of gems and along with all the deities. Presence of chakra in right hand of Prithu pleased Brahma. This chakra of Lord Vishnu is present in the hands of extremely dominating kings. Such a king remains unaffected even by the gods.

Thus occupying the royal throne, King Prithu was a boon for his subjects. He was so religious that the seas and mountains paved way for him. His flag always remained fresh and new. Even there was no need to sow the seeds; the earth herself provided all the cereals. Cows gave milk spontaneously and every leaf of all the trees in the kingdom was full of honey.

Immediately after his appearance, King Prithu organised a grand Yagya. At the time of Somabhishek (bathing with grape-wine) during the Yagya, a man and a woman appeared from the earth. The sages advised them to pray King Prithu. With folded hands they asked that the king had arrived moments before them. His reputation had not spread far and wide. Why should then they pray such a king? The sage said that they should pray the king for the great achievements he would attain in future. King Prithu thought that it was because of merits that a man becomes praiseworthy. 'Hence I will do exactly the same things that this couple would recite during the prayers' thought the king. Thus during the later course, king Prithu planted those virtues firmly in his conscience and ruled the earth. During his rule, he performed many great Yagyas.

During the anarchy of his father's regime, all the vegetation had been destroyed from all over the earth. There was nothing for the subjects to satisfy their hunger with. So, they approached him and said- "O great king! Due to the anarchy of your father's regime, the earth had annihilated all the cereals within her. Your subjects have no choice but to starve. Kindly protect us from this condition."

Pitiable condition of the subjects infuriated king Prithu. Taking the divine weapons of Lord Shiva, he ran after the earth. In guise of the cow, the earth ran in all the three worlds but wherever she went she found Prithu still chasing her. Thus shivering with fear, she ultimately appeared before him and said- "O king! Don't you see the sin in killing a helpless woman." Prithu said- "If killing a wretched person benefits scores of other people, there is no sin doing so." The earth said- "You want to kill me in the interest of your subjects but think what will be the base of the subject then?" Prithu said- "You need not worry about that. I will myself support my subjects." These words frightened the earth. She greeted the king and said- "O king! All the tasks started with a distinct purpose reach their completion successfully, so I am telling you a way out of the present condition. Do then, as you desire. I can give out all the herbs and cereals that I have annihilated in the form of milk. So, for the benefit of the subjects, kindly produce such a calf for which I can give milk spontaneously with motherly feelings. You then provide me with a plain surface everywhere so that I can produce milk that is the seed of all the cereals and herbs."

King Prithu then uprooted many great mountains with his bow and arrow and stowed them at a single place. Before that there was no distinct demarcation of village, towns, cities etc. because of the plain surface of the earth and there was no distinct sequence of cereals, cows, agriculture and trade. All this systems started from the time of Prithu. Since then people began to populate those

parts of the earth that were plain.

For the benefit of his subjects, King Pritu himself milked all the cereals from earth making Swayambhu Manu a calf. It is the cereals that still sustain the entire population of the world. Since then King Prithu came to be known as the father of earth because he had spared her life.

3.1.9 Birth of Prachin Barhi Worship of God by Prachetas

King Prithu had two sons- Antardhaan and Vaadi who were very religious minded themselves. Antardhaan's wife Shikhandi gave birth to Ivirdhaan. Prachin Barhi was the son of Ivirdhaan and his wife, Ghishna. Shukra, Gaya, Krishna, Vrij and Ajin were their other sons. Prachin Barhi was a great fosterer of his subjects. Through continuous oblations, he increased his subjects to great limits.

King Prachin Barhi married again with Savarna; the daughter of Samudra and they together produced ten sons. All of them were known as Prachetas who were expert in the art of archery. All of them observed serious penance under the sea for 10,000 years.

Maitreya says- O great sage! Kindly narrate to us the reason for which Prachetas observed severe penance under the sea.

Parashar says- Once by the inspiration of Brahma, King Prachin Barhi asked his sons Prachetas to continue the progeny in an honoured way. Prachetas agreed to obey the dictate of their father but they asked- O father! Kindly narrate to us, what should we do to enable ourselves so that we could carry out the process of reproduction.

King Prachin Barhi said that worship of Lord Vishnu was the only thing that enabled a person to achieve his desired objectives. He dictated his sons to worship Lord Vishnu. It was by the dictate of the father that all the ten Prachetas observed severe penance for ten thousand years under the sea.

At the end of their penance, Shri Hari appeared before them radiating with blue light like a freshly bloomed blue lotus. Accepting the greetings of the Prachetas, Lord Vishnu asked them to seek a boon. Prachetas then told the dictate of their father. Lord granted their boon. Thereafter all the Prachetas re-emerged from the waters.

3.1.10 Marriage of Prachetas and Birth of Prajapatis

Parashar says- During the time when Prachetas were engaged in penance, the earth was unprotected. Hence, huge trees came to cover her everywhere on land. Their foliage was so dense they that cut off entire sky and the sun could not reach the surface of the earth. After their emergence from the sea, Prachetas got very angry when they saw the trees. In anger, they let out formidable flames mixed with ghastly winds and uprooted all the trees before

reducing them to ashes. A massive destruction of the trees followed. Seeing that Soma, the king of the trees approached Prachetas and requested- 'O kings! Kindly relinquish your anger and listen to what I say.'

I will mediate a pact between the trees and you. The trees have produced an extremely pretty girl named Marisha. Her creation has been meant only for the continuation of your progeny. She will produce Daksha Prajapati who will be as radiant as the fire and cause much increase in your progeny further.

In the ancient times, a great savant of Vedas, sage Kandu was observing penance at the bank of river Gomti. Frightened by his penance Indra sent an elf Prabhalocha to create a disturbance. That elf successfully created a disturbance in the penance of Kandu who then began to live with her in a cave. Kandu passed one hundred years enjoying sensual pleasures with the elf. One day, the elf expressed her desire to leave for her heavenly abode. This came as a shock for the sage Kandu. He requested her to stay for some more time with him. The elf agreed to his request and stayed with him for another hundred years. Then once again she expressed her desire to leave for her heavenly abode. Once again, blinded by lust, the sage requested her to stay for some more time. Once again the elf stayed for another hundred years with Kandu.

Thus, every time, when the elf got ready to leave, sage stopped her. The elf knew about the agony of separation that a person experiences who is blinded by lust. She also feared the curse that such a person might pour down out of agony. Thus she herself did not desert the sage and their love kept on increasing like a new moon. One day, towards the evening, the sage hurriedly left his hut. Amazingly Prabhalocha enquired about the reasons why he was going out in such a hurry. The sage replied that as it was dusk, he should offer his evening prayers. The sage's reply amazed the elf further. Laughingly, she said- "O knower of religion, your day has ended after hundreds of years! Who will not be surprised to learn that your day ends after hundreds of years."

The sage said- "You had arrived at the river bank right in the morning today. You passed the whole day with me and now its evening. Why do you laugh at me then? Prabhalocha said- "O Brahmin! Hundreds of years have passed since I had arrived at your hut." Perplexed sage asked her- "Tell me exactly how much time has passed in our present communion? Prabhalocha told the sage that they had together passed nine hundred and seven years six months and three days. Hearing this, the sage began to curse himself that he was so sunk in the carnal pleasure with the elf that he even forgot the time. He also began to fret that his whole penance had been brought to nought. Thus cursing himself, the sage also scolded the elf and asked her to leave his hut at once.

"The elf was shivering in fear while her whole body was drenched in sweat. When she left the hermitage, she wiped her sweat with the leaves of the trees. While having carnal pleasure with the sage, Prabhalocha had conceived. Her foetus also oozed out in the form of sweat and was collected on the leaves. The

wind brought the different parts of the foetus together while I nourished it with my rays. Thus the foetus grew safely and ultimately took birth as a girl child, Marisha. The trees will present you that same girl as your wife", said Soma.

On the other hand after his penance was disturbed sage Kandu migrated to Purushottam region (modern Jagannath-Puri) and began his penance afresh to please Lord Vishnu.

Tale of Marisha's previous birth

Marisha, daughter of sage Kandu and Prabhalocha was a queen in her previous birth. She had lost her husband without having any child. She had then pleased Lord Vishnu with her devotion. The Lord had then asked her to seek a boon. She said- "O Lord! Having been widowed at a young age, I feel that my life has gone futile. I am very unfortunate. Hence O Lord! May I have by your grace, a virtuous husband like you and sons like Prajapati in my next birth. May I take birth not from the body of my mother.

Lord Vishnu said- "All your wishes shall come true in your next birth. You will have ten prowessive and popular husbands. With their help, you will give birth to Prajapati whose progeny will populate all the three worlds. You will take birth not from your mother's body still you will be unmatched in beauty."

Thus, coerced by Soma, Prachetas dropped their angry stance and accepted Marisha as their wife. From the parts of Prachetas, Marisha gave birth to Daksha Prajapati who had emerged from Brahma earlier. Following the dictate of Brahma, Daksha Prajapati produced different kinds of living beings as his children. First of all, he created womenfolk from his mind. He got ten of those women married to Dharma. Thirteen women were married to Kashyap while twenty-seven were married to Chandrama. All the gods, demons, Nagas, cows, birds, Gandharvas, Apsaras, giants etc. are the progeny of those fifty women.

Maitreya says- "O great sage! I want to hear the tale of origin of the gods, the demons and all other creatures in detail."

Parashar says- "Daksha created the sages, Gandharvas, demons, and serpents from his mind first. But none of those creatures could continue the progeny. So, with an intention of producing his progeny through carnal union, Daksha married Asikni, the daughter of another Prajapati. Daksha and Asikni together produced five thousand sons. All of those sons were eager to continue the process of reproduction when Devarshi Narad approached them and said- "O children! It appears from your action that all of you are eager to begin the process of reproduction right now. But before you do anything, kindly listen to what I say. All of you are so ignorant that you do not know anything about the earth. How then will you carry out the reproduction? Look! You can move anywhere in the universe, so why don't you go and see the end of the earth?" Thus motivated by Narad, all the five thousand sons of Daksha dived into the

sea and never returned thereafter like a river annihilates in the ocean.

Daksha then married Vairuni and produced one thousand sons. They also intended to carry out reproduction but were misguided by Narad. They too followed the footsteps of their elder brothers. Learning about the fate of his sons, Daksha cursed Narad. Then Daksha and Vairuni gave birth to sixty daughters. Ten of them were married to Dharma, thirteen to Kashyap, twenty-seven to Soma, four to Arishtnemi and two to Angira and Krishasva each. Arundhati, Vasu, Yaami, Lambaa, Bhaanu, Marutvati, Sankalpa, Muhurta, Saadhya and Vishwa were the wives of Dharma. Vishwa gave birth to Vishwadeva, Saadhya to Saadhyagana; Marutvaan was the son of Marutvati. Vasu gave birth to eight Vasus. Lambaa gave birth to Ghosha, Yaami to Naagveethi whereas Arundhati gave birth to all other creatures that dwell on earth. Sankalpa produced Sankalp that is omnipresent resolution.

Names of the eight Vasus were Aap, Dhruv, Soma, Dharma, Anil, Anal, Pratyush and Prabhas. Vaitand, Shram, Shant and Dhvani were the sons of Aap. All annihilating Kaal was the son of Dhruv. Varcha was the son of Soma. Dravin, Huta, Ityavar, Shishir, Pran and Varun were the sons of Dharma. Manojav and Avigyaatgati were the sons of Anil. Sharastamb, Shaakh, Vishaakh and Naigmeya were the sons of Anal. Pratyush had a son Deval. Vatstree the sister of Brihaspati was the wife of Prabhas. They had Vishwakarma as their son. Vishwakarma himself had four sons- Ajaikpad, Ahirbudhanya, Twashta, and Rudra. The great penancer Vishwaroop was the son of Twasta.

O great sage! Har, Bahuroop, Treyambak, Aparajit, Vrishakapi, Shambhu, Kapardi, Raivat, Mrigvyadh, Sharpa and Kapaali are the eleven Rudras. Sage Kashyap had thirteen wives- Aditi, Diti, Danu, Arishta, Surasa, Khasaa, Surabhi, Vinata, Taamra, Krodhavasha, Ira, Kadru and Muni. Now listen to the description of their progenies.

During the previous Manavantar, there were twelve gods named Tushit. At the end of the Manavantar, they met together and said- "O brothers! Let us now enter the womb of Aditi and take birth as the gods again in Vaivasvat Manavantar." Thus, Vishnu, Indra, Aryama, Dhataa, Twashta, Pushaa, Vivasvaan, Savita, Maitra, Varun, Anshu and Bhaga, these twelve sons of Aditi came to be known as Aditya.

The twenty-seven wives of Soma gave birth to many talented sons. Wives of Arishtnemi gave birth to sixteen sons. Thus in all thirty-three gods including eight Vasus, eleven Rudra, twelve Aditya, Prajapati and Vashatkar have been described in the Vedas. All of them are capable of taking birth at will. Just as the Sun rises and sets, similarly these gods also appear in different Yugas.

From the part of Kashyap, Diti gave birth to two invincible sons, Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaaksh and a daughter Sinhika who was married to Viprachiti. Hiranyakashipu had four sons- Anuhlad, Aahlad, Sahlad and Prahlad.

3.1.11 Tale of Prahlad and Narasimha Incarnation

Parashar says- By the boon of Brahma, Hiranyakashipu had acquired tremendous power and came to control all the three worlds. He had driven the gods out of heaven and used to receive the oblations offered to Surya, Vayu, Agni, Varun, Chandrama, Kuber, Yamaraaj etc. Because of his fear, all those gods roamed on earth.

All the creatures began to worship Hiranyakashipu. Beautiful and amorous elves danced in his palace while Gandharvas accompanied them on instruments. Prahlad was the youngest son of Hiranyakashipu. Like other children, he too was sent to Gurukula to be educated. One day, his teachers took Prahlad to Hiranyakashipu who was engaged in drinking of wine at that moment. Lovingly he took his son into his lap and asked- "O son, tell me, what you have learnt so far in the auspices of your teachers?"

Prahlad said- "O father! I salute to that Shri Hari who has no beginning, no end and no mid-part, who doesn't take birth and who is free from growth and decay." Hearing this, Hiranyakashipu looked at the teachers with bloodshot eyes and shouted at them- "O wretched Brahmins! In sheer violation of my orders, you have taught my son to praise my enemy." The teachers tried to express their apology saying that what Prahlad was saying was not taught by them. Hiranyakashipu asked then Prahlad who had taught him like that. Prahlad said- "O father! Lord Vishnu who resides in the heart of us all is the supreme creature. Who can teach anybody anything apart from Him?" Hiranyakashipu said- "O fool! Who is that Vishnu about whom you are describing before me, the Lord of entire world?" Prahlad replied- "Lord Vishnu is he who is contemplated about by the Yogis. He is the originator of the entire universe. His virtues cannot be described in words. That Parmeshwar is Vishnu."

Hiranyakashipu said- "Fool! Who can be Parmeshwar other than me? Do you want to die that you are babbling like that?" Prahlad said- "O father! Your anger is baseless. Lord Vishnu is the creator of all of us including you and me. He controls our breaths."

Infuriated Hiranyakashipu then ordered the teachers to take Prahlad away at once and wash his brain thoroughly. The teachers took Prahlad with them to their Gurukula. Prahlad began to concentrate in his studies. After many months, Hiranyakashipu once again called Prahlad to his palace and asked about his learning. Once again, Prahlad began to praise Lord Vishnu. This time, Hiranyakashipu ordered his assassination. He began to see his son as a threat to his throne. By the orders of Hiranyakashipu, many formidable demons attacked Prahlad with their weapons but Prahlad stood unfazed. He said- "O fools! Lord Vishnu is present in you, in me and even in your weapons. May your weapons have no effect on me." Indeed, the weapons of the demons could not even touch Prahlad. Hiranyakashipu said- "I can still pardon your life provided that you stop praising my opponent." Prahlad said- "O father! I fear nothing. By

the God's grace, I am free from the fear of birth and death." Hiranyakashipu then got Prahlad thrown amidst venomous snakes. But, biting by the snakes had no effect on Prahlad because his mind was contemplating in Lord Vishnu.

Hiranyakashipu then got Prahlad trampled by big bull elephants. But even elephants could not harm Prahlad. Instead their tusks were broken as soon as they touched Prahlad. Even then Prahlad tried to pacify his father that it was Lord's strength that protected him every time. Prahlad's teachers who were the sons of Shukracharya then assured Hiranyakashipu that Prahlad was having a fickle mind because of his tender age. They also assured the demon king of transforming Prahlad and took him to their hermitage once again.

Prahlad's Preaching

But in the hermitage, Prahlad assembled other demon children and said- " Friends, listen to my preaching carefully and don't take it for granted because I have no personal interest in it. Every living being takes birth and suffers a lot while passing his life through childhood, youth and old age. The end result of life is nothing but death. It is one's Karma that accompany him birth after birth. But in every birth, this soul mistakes hunger, thirst, cold or hot for the pleasures. More of the luxuries one collects, more the sorrow increases. Attachment and passion are the greatest cause of sorrow. Even after passing a life that is full of sorrow, one suffers the agony of death and rebirth again. This whole cycle continues again and again. Lord Vishnu is the ultimate refuge for the soul, which feels drowned in the ocean of sorrow."

Don't be confused with my young age. I am a boy like you. But the soul that stays within me is eternal. The soul has no distinct stages in life. But a human being is inflicted with lot of misconceptions. In the childhood, he prefers to play than contemplating on God. In the youth, lust and carnal pleasures attract the mind. Still a human being doesn't get serious about his benefit. He keeps on postponing his spiritual matters for his old age. But in old age, a human being has no option but to see his trembling fingers and repent about his past. Thus a human being spoils his whole life. A wise person hence must ignore the different stages of his body's stay on earth and make efforts for his benefit right in his childhood.

What I have told you is unchangeable fact. Start reciting Lord Vishnu's name for my pleasure atleast. His remembrance is enough to destroy all the sins. May your mind always contemplate on Him day and night. Thus all your miseries shall come to an end.

3.1.12 Attempts to Kill Prahlad

When the demons saw that their all efforts failed to faze Prahlad and that he was preaching the demon children they informed Hiranyakashipu about all these happenings. Hiranyakashipu at once called his cook and ordered him to poison Prahlad through food. But the poisonous food also could not hurt

Prahlad. In fact, its poison was rendered ineffective by the recitation of Lord's name. This frightened the cook. He informed Hiranyakashipu about that miraculous event.

Hiranyakashipu then ordered the priests who were Prahlad's teachers to invoke the ogress Kritya in order to kill Prahlad. The teachers tried to convince Prahlad before invoking Kritya"O prince, you are the son of great Hiranyakashipu and have taken birth in Brahma's lineage. What have you to do with matters like God and all that? The whole world is dependent on your father. You should also take refuge of your father and stop praising his opponent. Father is revered and even greater than the teachers."

Prahlad said-"O fortunate ones! I know the prowess of my father. I also do not doubt regarding my father's reverence and greatness. I will not commit any crime against him but kindly listen to me what I mean by the endless God."

"O teachers! There are four attainable goals in one's life. You ask me what have I to do with He, who helps all the human beings to attain these four goals-Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha. You are my teachers. You are free to say anything to me. But within me stays He who is the creator of all, who is the preserver of all and who is the destroyer of all of us. Kindly forgive me if I have committed any thing wrong in your honour."

The teachers said-"O foolish boy, we saved you from imminent death thinking that you are our disciple and that you will not balderdash in future. But still you speak nonsense. Listen, if you don't drop your stubbornness we'll have to invoke Kritya the ogress in order to get you slain."

Unfazed Prahlad said that life and death were immaterial for the soul that protects or destroys itself through auspicious and inauspicious deeds. Hence one should always strive to behave in an auspicious way. But Prahlad's words further enraged his teachers. They invoked the ogress Kritya to get Prahlad slain. Kritya hit Prahlad's chest hard with her trident. But as soon as the trident touched his chest it broke into pieces without harming Prahlad.

Seeing her attempt failed, Kritya killed the teachers and disappeared. His teachers' death caused immense pain for Prahlad. Mourning for their death, he prayed Lord Vishnu to resurrect them. Hearing his prayers, Lord Vishnu once again granted life to his teachers. The teachers got up as if from a deep slumber. They realised their mistake and blessed Prahlad and resolved never to have hostility against him. Then they went to the palace and informed Hiranyakashipu about all the happenings.

3.1.13 Description of Lord's Virtues by Prahlad and Protection of Prahlad by Sudarshan Chakra

Hearing the news of Kritya's failure to kill Prahlad, killing of teachers and their subsequent revival as effected by Prahlad, Hiranyakashipu called his son and

asked if all those miracles were natural or he knew some magical tricks. Prahlad said- "O father, neither I know any magic nor is the miracle a part of my nature. All these are ordinary things for he who has eternal God in his heart. No one can harm those who never wish ill for the others. All the living beings are equal for Him. In every creature, I see the same Lord Vishnu who is present within me; hence I never try to harm him or her. I cannot even think of harming anybody. It is this feeling that protects me from every physical, mental or divinely discomfort."

But these words failed to please Hiranyakashipu. He ordered his men to throw Prahlad from a very high fort. Even this attempt, however failed to cause any harm to Prahlad for the mother earth took him in her lap tenderly in the midway. Suspecting some illusionary powers helping Prahlad, Hiranyakashipu ordered Shambarasur to kill him using his illusionary powers. Shambarasur created many illusions to kill Prahlad. But right then Lord Vishnu sent His Sudarshan Chakra to counter those demonic illusions and protect Prahlad. Sudarshan Chakra destroyed all the demonic illusions one by one. Then Hiranyakashipu ordered Vayu to dry up Prahlad to death. When Vayu entered Prahlad’s body and began to dry him up, the Lord came to stay in his heart where God absorbed all the drying effects of the air thus rendering it weak.

After all those attempts failed, Prahlad returned to his teachers’ hermitage and resumed his education once again. The teachers trained him all the relevant subjects. Then they once again took Prahlad to his father and told him that now his education was over. Hiranyakashipu asked- "O son! How should one behave with the others? Tell me what have learned so far. I am eager to know your opinions."

Prahlad said-"O father, indeed my teachers have taught me in different subjects. I have too learned them with heart. They taught me that diplomatic policies should be applied in order to train friendship. But excuse me father, I see no friend or no enemy, so in my opinion these policies are totally irrelevant. Tell me O father what is the use of means when there is nobody to be trained. Lord Vishnu is present everywhere. In you, in me and in all other creatures. Hence instead of using in sinisterly actions, one should use his wits for good and benefit of all."

"O fortunate one, everybody longs for the throne and a big kingdom. But only those attain these things who really deserve and have them in their destiny. Even the most inert and imprudent people who are weak and know nothing about the policies get these things because of destiny. Hence all those who wish for splendour must strive to accumulate pious actions. Those who long for salvation must strive to acquire impartial view for all. Such actions please God and when He is pleased all the miseries are attenuated."

Hearing these words, Hiranyakashipu kicked Prahlad hard and ordered his demons to tie him in Naagpaash and throw into the sea. The demons obeyed

their master and threw Prahlad into the sea after tying him in Naagpaash. With Prahlad's motion great disturbances occurred in the sea, seeing that Hiranyakashipu ordered the demons to cover the sea with huge mountains so that Prahlad could not get a passage to escape. When the demons uprooted huge mountains and put them into the sea, Prahlad began to pray God with concentrated mind.

3.1.14 Appearance of the Lord

As soon as Prahlad began to pray the Lord, his Naagpaash broke and the mountains that the demons had thrown into the sea also lightened up causing great relief for Prahlad. Lord Vishnu appeared before him and said- "O Prahlad! I am pleased with your devotion. You may seek any boon of your wish." Prahlad said- "May I always have an unconditional devotion for you. May your remembrance never be away from my heart."

God said - " Your devotion for me shall always remain the same. Now, seek anything you wish." Prahlad said- "O Lord! My father has always cultivated hostility for you because of my devotion. May my father be free from the sin of his action." Lord said- "O Prahlad! All your wishes shall come true but still seek any boon of your choice."

Prahlad said- "O Lord! I don't want anything other than devotion for you." Lord said -" O Prahlad! You have nothing in your mind but devotion for me, so with my grace, you will attain supreme abode."

Saying this, the Lord disappeared. In later course, ultimately Hiranyakashipu decided to kill Prahlad himself. He tied Prahlad to a pillar and shouting abusively for God, he hit the pillar. As soon as he hit the pillar, it broke and Lord appeared from it in Narsimha incarnation. His appearance was extremely formidable with half human and half lion form. Dragging Hiranyakashipu to the threshold, He killed him with his powerful talons. After the killing of his father, Prahlad took over the throne and ruled his subjects religiously.

3.1.15 Lineage of Kashyap's Other Wives and Origin of Marudgana

After the death of Hiranyakashipu, Prahlad continued his lineage. Prahlad had a son, Virochan. Virochan in his turn had Bali as his son. The prowessive Bali was sent to the nether world by Vaaman incarnation of Lord. Bali had one hundred sons among whom Baanasur was the eldest.

Kashyap's second wife Danu had sons like Dwimurdha, Shambar, Ayomuk, Shankushira, Kapil, Shankar, Ekchakra, Mahabaahu, Taarak, Mahabal, Swarbhanu, Vrishparva, Pulom and Viprachiti. Swarbhanu had a daughter- Prabha whereas Sarmishtha, Updan, and Haishira were the daughters of Vrishparva. Vaishwanar had two daughters- Puloma and Kaalka who were married to Kashyap. From the part of Kashyap, they gave birth to sixty thousand giants known as Paulom and Kaalkeya.

Kashyap's another wife, Taamra gave birth to six daughters- Shuki, Shyeni, Bhaasi, Sugreevi, Suchi and Griddhrika. Shuki gave birth to the birds like parrots, owls and crows. Shyeni gave birth to sleep while Bhaasi produced light. Griddhrika gave birth to vultures whereas Suchi produced aquatic birds. Sugreevi gave birth to equine animals like horse, camels and asses.

Vinata, one of the wives of Kashyap gave birth to Garud and Arun. Garud became the vehicle of Lord Vishnu while Arun became the charioteer of the Sun. Surasa gave birth to millions of the snakes. Kadru also had great snakes like Shesha, Vaasuki, Takshak, Shankhshwet, Mahapadm, Kambal, Ashwatar, Ilaputra, Naag, Karkotak, Dhananjay etc. as her sons. Krodhavasha gave birth to anger and devils. Surabhi gave birth to cows and buffaloes. Ira gave birth to the trees, creepers, and scores of grasses. Khaasa gave birth to Yaksha and monsters. Muni produced elves whereas Arishta gave birth to Gandharvas.

After the annihilation of her sons, Diti once again pleased Kashyap and sought a son who could destroy even Indra. Kashyap granted her boon but stipulated that she would have such a son only when she observes complete sanctity during one hundred years of gestation period. Diti agreed to abide by the stipulation. Then they copulated as a result of which Diti conceived.

When Indra came to know that Diti had conceived a son who would be able to destroy even him he arrived at Kashyap's hermitage and began to serve Diti with full devotion. He had in fact arrived there to see if by chance Diti ever violated the stipulation for then he would easily destroy the unborn child without incurring any sin. Sometime before the completion of gestation period, one day, Diti did violate the stipulation. She forgot to wash her feet after attending nature's call and retired on the bed. Indra was waiting for the moment. He at once entered Diti's womb carrying his mace in hand. There he broke the foetus into seven pieces but still the foetus survived and began to cry loudly. Indra then broke each of those seven pieces into seven pieces more and consoled them not to cry. Those forty-nine pieces of Diti's foetus later on came to be known as Marudgana the assistants of Indra.

3.1.16 The Description of Universal Order

When the great sages crowned Prithu as the king of the entire earth, Brahma had also divided the kingdoms. Thus, Brahma appointed Chandrama as the ruler of all the Nakshatras, planets, Brahmins, vegetation, Yagya, penance etc. He also appointed Kuber as the ruler of the kings, Varun as the ruler of the water bodies, Vishnu as the ruler of Adityas and Agni as the ruler of Vasus. Similarly, Daksha was appointed as the ruler of all the Prajapatis, Indra as the ruler of Marudgana and Prahlad was appointed as the ruler of the demons. Dharmaraaj Yama became the ruler of Pitragana and Airavat became the ruler of all the elephants. Garud came to rule the birds. Indra was appointed as king of the gods, Uchchaisharva as the king of the horses, Vrishabh as the king of the cows. Lion became the king of the beasts, Sheshnaag of the snakes, Himalaya became the king of all the landmasses, Kapil became the king of the sages and

tiger became the king of those animals that have nails and long teeth.

Thereafter, Brahma appointed Dikpals (guardians of the directions) on all corners of the earth. These Dikpals still guard the earth, which has seven continents and scores of big and small cities.

All the gods, demons, human beings, animals, birds, reptiles, in fact every living being have originated from the parts of omnipotent Lord Vishnu. Hence nobody but Lord Vishnu has the capacity to foster all the living beings on earth. That eternal God creates the world fosters it and ultimately destroys it. Thus, the Lord has four parts in the form of this entire creation. One of His parts remains unmanifested as Brahma. Second part appears like Prajapatis. Time is His third part whereas all the living beings constitute His fourth part.

Since the beginning, during the existence and till the ultimate annihilation of the universe, the process of creation continued through Brahma, Prajapatis and all other living beings. In the beginning, Brahma creates the primitive living beings. Then the process of creation is taken over by Prajapatis. When their progenies populate the world, the process of creation continues spontaneously. Without Kaal, no one including Brahma, Prajapatis and all the living beings can carry out the process of creation. Shri Hari is in the base of every new creation that takes place through a pre-existing creation. The supreme abode of Lord Vishnu remains intangible.

Shri Hari bears the intangible, pure and all pervasive spirit of the universe as Kaustubh Mani. He bears the intelligence as his mace. He bears the two kinds of ego in his conch and Shaarang bow. Third kind of ego is present as the wheel in His hand. Vayjayanti garland that adorns His neck represents five senses and five physical elements. He bears the sense and motor organs as the arrows and the sword that He holds is knowledge. Thus, everything is dependent on Shri Hari. He is Himself intangible but for the benefit of human being, he bears all these things as ornaments. Even the counting of time is present in Him.

God is present in all the seven worlds. He is the base of all the knowledge, our ancestor and the ancestors of our ancestors. He is present in the gods, human beings, animals, all the Vedas, Ayurveda, Puraan and other religious scriptures. All the visible and invisible things in the world have Lord Vishnu in them. Nothing is different from Him. Such a feeling in the mind keeps all the miseries and physical ailments away.

3.2 Chapter 2 (Part 2)

This chapter contains 15 sections.

3.2.1 Description of Priyavrat’s Lineage

Maitreya says- "O sage! Now I wish to hear the description of the lineage of Priyavrata who was the son of Swayambhu Manu."

Parashar says- Priyavrata was married to the daughter of sage Kardam. They had two daughters and ten sons. Three of his sons- Medha, Agnibaahu and Putra knew everything about their previous births. Hence, they did not take any interest in royal luxuries. The remaining seven sons received the domain of seven parts of the earth from their father Priyavrata who then had taken to penance at a greatly sacred place named Shaalgraam.

Among the eight Vasus, one was Hima. Merudevi was his wife. They had a son Rishabh. Rishabh had one hundred sons among which Bharat was the eldest. When he grew old, Rishabh transferred the onus of his kingdom on his eldest son Bharat and himself took to penance in the forest. Since then, this landmass that stretches from the snowy peaks of Himalayas to the splashing Indian Ocean is known as Bharatvarsha. Bharat had a religious minded son Sumati.

Indradyumna was the son of Sumati. Indradyumna's son was Parmeshthi. After him, the lineage of Priyavrata continued as follows- Pratihaar- Pratiharta- Bhava- Udgeeth- Prastav- Prithu- Naka- Gaya- Nar- Virat- Mahavirya- Dheemaan- Mahaant- Manasyu- Twasta- Viraj- Raj- Shatajit. Shatajit had one hundred sons whose descendants populated the earth. They divided Bharatvarsha into nine parts.

3.2.2 Geographical Description

The earth has seven great islands- Jambu, Plaksha, Shaalmali, Kusha, Kronch, Shaakh and Pushkar. These are surrounded by oceans having saline water, sugarcane juice, wine, ghee, curd, milk and sweet water respectively. Jambudweep is situated at the centre. Situated at the centre of Jambudweep is golden Sumeru Mountain (Himalayas), which is eighty-four thousand Yojans high. Towards the south of Sumeru are Himavaan, Hemkut and Nishad Mountains. Towards its north are Neel and Shringi Mountains. All these mountains are two thousand Yojans high with similar expansion.

Towards the south of Sumeru Mountain, Bharatvarsha is the first landmass followed by Kimpurushvarsha and Harivarsha. In the north of Sumeru Mountain, Ramyak is the first landmass followed by Hiranyamay and Uttarkuruvarsha. All these landmasses have expansion of nine thousand Yojans. At the centre of these landmasses is Ilaavritvarsha that bears Sumeru Mountain. On the four sides of Sumeru Mountain are four smaller mountains that seem to support the massive Sumeru. Among these four mountains, Mandrachal Mountain is in the east and in the south is Gandhmaadan. Vipul is in the west and Supaarsh is in the north. All these four mountains are ten thousand Yojans high and have lofty trees of Cadamba, Jambu, Pipal and Banyan. Because of abundance of Jambu trees, this island came to be known as Jambudweep. It bears big fruits, which scatter all around upon falling on the earth. Their juice gives rise to the river Jambu. It is said that its water is capable of keeping demerits like sweat, foul smell, old age and loss of senses away from the drinker. When the juice of this fruit dries, it leaves the soil golden in colour.

Towards the east of Sumeru Mountain is Bhadrashvavarsha and towards the west is Ketumaalvarsha. Midway between the two is Ilaavritvarsha. On the eastern side of Meru Mountain is the forest of Chaitrarath. In the south is Gandhmaadan and in the west is Vaibhraaj and towards the north is the forest named Nandan. Mount Sumeru also holds four holy lakes named Arunodaya, Mahabhadra, Asitoda and Maanas.

Shitambh, Kumund, Kukri, Maalyavaan, Vaikank are some of the peaks situated towards the eastern side of Sumeru. Towards the southern side are the peaks of Trikut, Shishir, Patang, Ruchak and Nishaad. In the west are situated peaks of Shikhivaasa, Vaidurya, Kapil, Gandhmaadan and Jaarudhi and in the north are situated the peaks of Shankhkoot, Rishabh, Hans, Naag and Kaalanj.

Above the mount Meru is situated Brahmapuri of Brahma which has an expansion of 14,000 Yojans. The Ganges that rises from the feet of Lord Vishnu circles the lunar sphere before falling in Brahmapuri. Thence it divides into four rivers- Sita, Chakshu, Alaknanda and Bhadra that flow into four directions.

The landmasses of Bharat, Ketumaal, Bhadraashva and Kuru appear like lotus leaf in shape. Among all the peaks that surround Mount Meru are present beautiful caves. There also exist beautiful towns and gardens. In these towns are situated beautiful temples of Lakshmi, Vishnu, Agni and Surya. Ravines of these mountains are populated by Gandharvas, Rakshasa, Yaksha and Daanavas. Besides them, scores of religious people also live there.

Lord Vishnu stays as Hayagreev (human figure with horse head) form in Bhadrashvavarsha. In Ketumaalvarsha, He is in boar form and in Bharatvarsha; He stays in turtle form. In Kuruvarsha, Lord Vishnu stays as fish. Thus Lord Vishnu is present everywhere. People of these eight landmasses are free from all kinds of sorrow, pain, emotions, hunger etc. and lead a healthy and rich life that extends up to ten or twelve thousand years. All these landmasses have seven indigenous mountains each from which hundreds of rivers rise.

3.2.3 Division of Bharat and Other Landmasses

The landmass that is present between Himalayas and the ocean is known as Bharat. It has an expansion of 9,000 Yojans. It is populated by the descendants of Bharat. It has seven native mountains- Mahendra, Malay, Sahaya, Shuktimaan, Riksha, Vindhya and Paariyaatra.

Bharatvarsha has nine divisions named Indradweep, Kaseru, Taamraparn, Gamastimaan, Naagdweep, Soumya, Gandharva, Vaarun and Yahadweep which is surrounded by the sea and has an expansion of 1000 Yojans. In the eastern part of Bharat, live Kiraat whereas in the western part live Yavans. In the mid part of Bharat, live population of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras who pass their lives engage in works ascribed to their respective class.

Rivers in India- From the Himalayas rise Shatudri (Sutlej) and Chandrabhaaga rivers. From Paariyaatra Mountain rise Veda and Smriti rivers. Narmada and Surasa rivers rise from Vindyachal. Taapi, Payoshani and Nirvindhya rivers rise from Riksha Mountain. Godavari, Bheemrati and Krishnaveli rivers rise from Sahaya Mountains. Kritmaala and Tamraparni rivers rise from Malayaachal. Trisaama and Aryakulyaa rivers rise from Mahendragiri. Rishikulya and Kumaari rivers rise from Shuktimaan Mountain. All these rivers have scores of other branches and tributaries.

Four Yugas namely Satayug, Tretayug, Dwaparyug and Kaliyug descend on Bharatvarsha. In Bharatvarsha, sages observe penance to attain better life in another world, people organise Yagyas and offer donations to the Brahmins respectfully. In Jambudweep, Lord Vishnu is worshipped in Yagyas. Bharatvarsha is the land par excellence in Jambudweep for it is a land of action. Soul passes through millions of births, only then it finds a chance to take birth in Bharatvarsha when its pious deeds accumulate to a certain extent. Even the gods envy those people who take birth in Bharatvarsha. People in Bharatvarsha act without a desire to get fruits from their action. They dedicate their whole action to Lord Vishnu and ultimately mingle with Him.

3.2.4 Description of Other Dvipas

Plakshdweep- Plakshdweep has an expansion of 2,00,000 Yojans. Its ruler Meghatithi had seven sons- Shaanthaya, Shishir, Sukhodaya, Anand, Shiva, Kshemak and Dhruv. Those seven princes later on came to rule Plakshdweep. Hence, Plakshdweep had seven divisions named after these seven princes. Seven mountains mark the boundaries of Plakshdweep. These are Gomed, Chandra, Naarad, Dundubhi, Sobhak, Sumana and Vaibhraaj. People of Plakshdweep live long and pleasant life. Seven rivers namely Anutapta, Shikhi, Vipaasha, Tridiva, Aklamaa, Amrita and Sukrita flow in Plakshdweep. In all the islands from Plakshdweep to Shaakhdweep, only Tretayug stays. Plaksh tree (Paakad) abound in Plakshdweep. Lord Vishnu is worshipped there as Soma.

Shaalmaldweep- Vayushmaan was the ruler of Shaalmaldweep. He too had seven sons- Shwet, Harit, Jibhoot, Rohit, Vaidyut, Maanas and Suprabh. Hence Shaalmaldweep was also divided into seven divisions named after these princes. A sea of sugarcane juice surrounds this island. Shaalmaldweep has seven mountains which are the source of all the gemstones. Seven rivers flow in Shaalmaldweep. These rivers contain innumerable kinds of medicinal herbs. Lord Vishnu is worshipped there in Vayu form. Because of the abundance of Semul (silk cotton) trees, this island came to be known as Shaalmaldweep. A sea of wine surrounds this island.

Kushdweep- The ruler of Kushdweep, Jyotishmaan had seven sons. Their names were Venumaan, Vairath, Lamban, Ghriti, Prabhakar and Kapil. The divisions of this island were named after them. This island too has seven mountains and seven rivers.

Lord Vishnu is worshipped here in Janardan form. Because of abundance of Kusha grass, this island is known as Kushdweep. A sea of ghee surrounds this island.

Kraunchdweep- The ruler of Kraunchdweep, Dyutimaan had seven sons named Kushal, Mandak, Ushna, Peevar, Andhkaarak, Muni and Dudhumbi. Hence the seven divisions of this island were named after these princes. This island too has seven mountains and seven main rivers with hundreds of small rivers and tributaries. Lord Vishnu is worshipped here in Rudra form through Yagyas. A sea of whey surrounds this island.

Shaakhdweep- The ruler of Shaakhdweep Bhavya, also had seven sons named Jalad, Kumar, Sukumar, Marichak, Kutumod, Maudaaki and Mahadrum. Hence the seven divisions of this island were named after these princes; this island too has seven mountains and seven holy rivers. Lord Vishnu is worshipped here in Surya form. Because of an abundance of Shaakh trees, this island got its name. A sea of milk surrounds this island.

Pushkardweep- This is the largest among all the seven islands. Its ruler Savan had two sons- Mahavir and Dhaataki. Hence, this island has two divisions- Mahavirkhand and Dhaatakikhand. A huge mountain named Maansotra is situated at the centre of this great island. Brahma stays on a huge Banyan tree in this island. A sea of sweet water surrounds this island.

3.2.5 Description of the Nether Worlds

Earth’s total height is 70,000 Yojans. In her depth, are situated seven nether worlds with a depth of 10,000 Yojans each respectively. Names of these seven nether worlds are Atal, Vital, Nital, Gamastimaan, Mahaatal, Sutal and Paatal. These nether worlds have beautiful palaces, and have lands which are white, black, red and yellow in colour with gravel, rocky and golden soil. Scores of races including Daanav, Daitya, Yaksha and Naagas live there.

Once upon a time, Naarad visited these nether worlds. When he returned to heaven, he told the people there that the nether world was more beautiful than heaven. He told them that ornaments of the Naagas contained precious gemstones and the womenfolk of Daitya and Daanavas were an attraction even for the gods. The sun was illuminating in the nether worlds but not scorching. Similarly, the Moon only shone there but did not cause bitter cold.

Beneath the nether worlds is situated an idolised form of Lord Vishnu. It is known as Shesh. Even the demons and giants cannot describe His virtues. He has thousands of hoods each carrying a bright gemstone that illuminates the azimuths. In His presence, the demons lose their strength. His eyes are red and He wears an earring, crown, garland and blue length of cloth. Bearing the flow of Ganges, He stays like the Kailash Mountain. At the end of the Kalp, poison emanates from His thousands of hoods and destroys all the three worlds taking

the form of Rudra named Sankarshan. Nobody can find the ends of His virtues; hence He is known as Anant.

3.2.6 Description of Hells

Beneath the earth and water are situated the hells into which, the sinners are thrown. Raurav, Sukar, Rodha, Taal, Vishsan, Mahajwaal, Taptakumbh, Lavan, Vilohit, Rudhirambh, Vaitarni, Krimish, Krimibhojan, Asipatravan, Krishna, Lalabhaksha, Daarun, Puyuvah, Paap, Vahnijwaal, Adhahshira, Sandansh, Kaalsutra, Tamas, Aavichi, Swabhojan, Apratishthit and Aprachi are the main hells. These are all under the domain of Yamaraaj.

Those who give false witness are thrown into Raurav hell. Those who kill unborn babies and cows or destroy the villages fall into Rodha hell. Those who drink wine, kill Brahmin or steal gold fall into Sukar hell. Those who kill Kshatriya or Vaishya fall into Taal hell. Those who copulate with teacher's wife or their own sister fall in Taptakumbh hell. Those who sell women and horses fall in Taptloha hell. Those who copulate with their daughter or daughter-in-law fall into Mahajwaal hell. Those who criticise the teachers and the Vedas or sell Vedas fall into Lavan hell. Those who violate social norms fall in Vilohit hell and those who envy the gods, the Brahmins and their parents fall in Krimibhaksha hell.

Those who dine first even before the parents, the gods and the guests fall into Lalabhaksha hell. Those who manufacture arrows fall in Vedhak hell. Those who manufacture swords fall in Vishsan hell. Backbiters, killers of friends and sellers of wine fall in Rudhiraandh hell. Destroyers of Yagya and villages fall in Vaitarni hell.

Thus, the sinners have to suffer scores of tortures in these and many other hells. These sinners after passing their lives in the hell take birth as worms, aquatic animals and birds, terrestrial animals, human beings, religious people etc. Only those sinners who do not expiate for their sins fall into the hell. Our sages have made provisions of expiation for those sinners who feel guilty in their conscience after committing their sins. Remembrance of Lord's name is in itself the greatest expiation. Remembrance of Lord's name anytime in life destroys all the previous sins instantaneously. Hence recitation of Vasudeva's name is sure way of attaining salvation. Thus those who recite and remember Lord Vishnu's name never fall in any hell because their sins have been destroyed. Anything where one feels pleasant is heaven and opposite of it is hell.

3.2.7 Description of Celestial Worlds

Maitreya says- "O Brahmin! Kindly narrate now about the celestial worlds and the position of stars and planets there."

Parashar says- At a height of 1,00,000 Yojans above the earth is the sphere of the Sun. 1,00,000 Yojans above it is the sphere of the Moon and 1,00,000 Yojans above it is the sphere of the stars.

At a height of 2,00,000 Yojans above, the sphere of stars is Buddh (Mercury) and 2,00,000 Yojans above it is Shukra (Venus). Above Venus are Mangal (Mars), Brihaspati (Jupiter), and Shani (Saturn) at respective heights of 2,00,000 Yojans each. 1,00,000 Yojans above the Saturn is Saptarishi and 1,00,000 Yojans above it is the sphere of Dhruv. It appears as the centre of a bright ring.

One crore Yojans above Dhruv is Maharloka where sages like Bhrigu etc. live. Two crore Yojans above Maharloka is Janaloka where Brahma's sons Sanakaadi Kumars live. At a height of 8,00,00,000 Yojans above Janaloka is Tapaloka live deities named Vairaaj who are never consigned to flames. Twelve crore Yojans above Tapaloka is Satyaloka which is also known as Brahmaloka. Only immortal beings live there.

3.2.8 Order of the Sun, the Stars and other Constellations

The Sun travels speedily across the sky like an arrow. He determines the night and the day. With the rising and setting of the Sun, one can have knowledge of the directions. Sun lights up all the places in the entire world except Brahmaloka. Sun's rays that reach Brahmaloka return back rendered ineffective by the radiance of Brahma. Since Mount Sumeru is situated at the north of all the islands and Varsh, hence towards the northern side of it, one part of land experiences the day while another part experiences the night all the time. The radiant Sun setting merges with fire. Hence, fire also has the power of illuminating and warming its environment.

At the beginning of Uttaraayan (northward motion of the Sun), the Sun enters the zodiac of Capricorn. Travelling through Aquarius and Pisces, it reaches the equator which is at the centre of the earth. Thereafter the nights begin to decrease in comparison of the days. Then travelling through Aries, Taurus and Gemini, the Sun enters Cancer to begin its southward journey.

The period of time between the day and night is dusk twilight. At that time, formidable demons try to swallow the Sun. Thus they have fierce battle with the Sun. The recitation of hymns by learned Brahmins during dusk twilight helps the Sun regain his lost radiance. With his brilliance then the demons are destroyed. Thus the Sun is a perfect form of Lord Vishnu. It shines with its inner radiance. Omkar is a symbolisation of the Sun. It is also mandatory for the Brahmins to perform evening worship. Those who do not worship in the evening hurt the Sun.

Towards the north of Saptarishi constellation, where polestar is situated, there is an abode of Lord Vishnu. Only those sages can reach there who are free from faults and whose sins and pious deeds have been attenuated. Supremely brilliant Dhruv stays in the abode of Vishnu. Every other thing is dependent upon Dhruv. All the Nakshatras also depend on Dhruv. On Nakshatras depend the clouds and on the clouds depends the rain and on the rains depend the nourishment of entire world. Thus, all the other things come to depend upon Dhruv.

The sacred Ganges which is the destroyer of every sin also rises from the abode of Lord Vishnu. Dhruv bears the Ganges on his head. Flowing through the sphere of the Moon, the Ganges falls on Mount Meru and flows in every direction to sanctify the entire world. Bathing in the water of the Ganges destroys all the sins. Offering of oblations in the waters of Ganges satiates dead ancestors for one hundred years.

Starry, chameleon-like appearance of Lord Vishnu can be seen in the night sky. A polestar is present in its tail. All the other stars, the Sun, the Moon and other planets are present on different parts of this chameleon and go round the polestar. Uttanpaad's son Dhruv had pleased this chameleon-like appearance of Lord Vishnu with his penance and sought a fixed position in His tail. Even the Sun is dependent on Dhruv.

The Sun keeps on evaporating the water for eight months in a year. This evaporated water then rains for four months and nourishes the soil and produces different kinds of cereals for the nourishment of the entire world. The water that is evaporated by the Sun also nourishes the Moon. But the Moon itself does not consume that water. Instead it gives that water to the clouds. During winter season, this water released by the Moon falls on earth as snow and dew.

The Sun draws water from Akashganga (the Milky Way) also and causes it to rain on earth at once. That water is so sacred that mere touch of it destroys all the sins. The rains that fall during Nakshatras like Kritika; Rohini, Addra etc. come from the water of Akashganga.

3.2.9 Twelve Names of the Sun

In the month of Chaitra, the Sun rides his chariot as Dhaata. During that period, elf Kratusthala, sage Pulastya, Naag Vaasuki, Yaksha Rathmirith, demon Heti and the Gandharva Tumbaru are also present on the chariot as his assistants.

In the month of Vaishaakh, the Sun rides his chariot as Aryamaa with sage Pulah, Yaksha Rathauja, elf Punjasthala, demon Praheti, snake Kachchhveer and Gandharva Naarad as his assistants.

In the month of Jyeshtha, the Sun is known as Mitra with sage Atri, snake Takshak, demon Paurusheya, elf Menaka, Gandharva Haha and Yaksha Rathswan as his assistants.

In the month of Ashaad, the Sun rides his chariot as Varun with sage Vashishta, snake Naag, elf Sahajanya, Gandharva Huhu, demon Ratha and Yaksha Rathachitra as his assistants.

In the month of Shraavan, the Sun is known as Indra with Gandharva Vishwabasu, Yaksha Strot, snake Elaputra, sage Angira, elf Prabhalocha and the demon Sarpi as his assistants.

In the month of Bhaadrapad, the Sun is known as Vivasvaan. With Gandharva Ugrasena, sage Bhrigu, Yaksha, Aapuran, elf Anubhlocha, snake Shankhpaal and the demon Vyaghra as his assistants.

In the month of Ashwin, the Sun is known as Pusha with Gandharva Vasuruchi, demon Vaat, sage Gautam, snake Dhananjay, Yaksha Sushen and the elf Ghritaachi as his assistants. In the month of Kartik, the Sun is known as Parjanya and is assisted by the Gandharva Vishwabasu, sage Bharadwaj, snake Airavat, elf Vishwashree, Yaksha Senjit and the demon Aap.

In the month of Maargsheersh, the Sun is known as Ansh and is assisted by sage Kashyap, Yaksha Tarkshya, snake Mahapadma, elf Urvashi, Gandharva Chitrasen and the demon Vidyut. In the month of Paush, the Sun is known as Bhaga and is assisted by sage Kratu, Gandharva Urnaayu, demon Sfurja, snake Karkotak, Yaksha Arishtnemi and elf Purvachitti. In the month of Maagh, the Sun is known as Twasta with sage Jamadagni, snake Cambal, elf Tilottama, demon Brahmopet, Yaksha Ritaajit and Gandharva Dhritarashtra.

In the month of Phagun, the Sun is known as Vishnu and is assisted by snake Ashwatar, elf Rambha, Gandharva Suryavacha, Yaksha Shatajit, sage Vishwamitra and the demon Yagyopet. Thus having some parts of Lord Vishnu's radiance, these seven ganas stay in the sphere of the Sun for one month alternatively. They are also the cause of seasons like summer, winter and rain.

3.2.10 Description of Surya Shakti and Vaishnava Shakti

Maitreya says- "Lord, if only the seven Ganas are entrusted with the job of causing cold and summer, drought and rain, what is the purpose then of the Sun's existence? "

Parashar says- It is true that Surya is one of the seven Ganas. Yet being the chief among them, it has special significance. Omnipotent para-power of Lord Vishnu is nothing but the three Vedas. These together stay within the Sun and provide it with energy necessary to sustain the world. Their presence within the Sun remains constant irrespective of the Sun's changing names every month. In the morning, Rigveda prays the Sun with its Shrutis. In the noontime, Yajurveda prays the Sun whereas in the evening, Shrutis of Samaveda pray the Sun. Thus, Lord Vishnu always energises the Sun.

Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh are also present in trinity form. Their trinity too represents the three Vedas. At the beginning of creation, Brahma was in the form of Rigveda. During the sustenance of the universe, Lord Vishnu stays in Yajurveda form whereas at the end of the creation when Pralay occurs, Rudra takes Samaveda form. Hence the recitation of Samaveda is considered inauspicious. Energies of the trinity stays within the Sun in synergetic form. Hence the Sun glows brilliantly and destroys the darkness.

Lord Vishnu, who represents energy of this trinity, never rises nor sets. His Vaishnavi Shakti never parts with the Sun's chariot and stays there irrespective of the changing names of the Sun with months. Thus, the Sun, which causes the formation of day and night always satiates Pitragana, Devgana and human beings. One of the Sun's rays named Sushumna nourishes the Moon during its brighter phase. Then during the darker phase, the gods drink the phases of the Moon, which are in fact, ambrosia accumulated during the brighter phase. When two days are left for the completion of darker phase, Pitragana drink the remaining two phases of the Moon. Thus, the Sun satiates the gods and the deceased ancestors.

The water that the Sun draws from earth is returned to the earth in the form of rains. This rainfall produces cereals, which nourish the entire population on earth.

3.2.11 Description of the Nine Planets

The Moon rides a chariot with three wheels. This chariot is hauled by ten horses. During its entire journey, the Moon passes through all the twenty-seven Nakshatras. These horses haul the Moon's chariot for a complete Kalpa. With his rays, the Sun nourishes the Moon, which loses its strength because of drinking of its ambrosia by the gods.

When the gods brought even the last drop of nectar from the Moon, it enters the Sun's sphere. That day is known as Amavasya (moonless night). That day, the Moon first enters the water then the foliage of the trees, creepers etc. and ultimately enters the Sun's sphere. That is why, anybody who cuts trees or even plucks a leaf commits crime equal to killing of Brahmin. On the day of Amavasya, Pitragana drink the nectar from the Moon and feel sated. Thus, Moon sates the gods during the brighter phase and the Pitragana during darker phase. The Moon also showers its nectar on the trees, creepers and other vegetation. It also causes exhilaration for the human beings, animals, birds and creatures like insects etc.

Buddha (Mercury) is the son of the Moon. His chariot is made of fire and air and is hauled by eight horses of deep yellow colour. The chariot of Shukra (Venus) is also very splendid and is adorned by beautiful flags. Mangal (Mars) rides a golden chariot, which is born from the fire. His chariot is hauled by eight red horses. Brihaspati rides a golden chariot hauled by eight yellow horses. Shani (Saturn) is famous for slow motion. He rides a chariot which was born from the sky. The colour of his chariot's horses is also very peculiar. Rahu's chariot is brown in colour and is hauled by eight black horses. Ketu's chariot is also drawn by eight horses, which are red in colour.

Chariots of all the nine planets are tied to Dhruv. Thus, all of them traverse the same path again and again year after year. Sighting of Shishumaar chakra (constellation path) in the night destroys all the sins that a human being commits during the daytime.

Water is a tangible form of Lord Vishnu. Even the earth was born out of water. Stars, all the three worlds, forests, vegetation, mountains, directions, rivers, sea and entire nature is the form of Lord Vishnu. This vivid nature thus shows omnipresence character of Lord Vishnu.

3.2.12 Life Sketch of Bharat

Maitreya says- "Lord! Now I wish to hear various tales from the life of King Bharat. He was born in a pious land and always contemplated on God. Even then why he failed to attain salvation? What did he do in his next birth as a Brahmin?"

Parashar says- King Bharat always contemplated on God. He stayed at Shaalgraam for a long time. There he used to recite the names of God and collect various materials for His worship. Other than that, he did not do anything. One day while he was taking bath in the river, a doe arrived at the opposite bank. She was in the final stage of pregnancy. While she was drinking water, a lion roared somewhere in the forest behind her. That roar frightened the doe so much that she jumped across the river to save her life. Exertion of jumping resulted in premature littering of her fawn, which fell in the river. On the other hand, the doe also could not bear the pain and died.

King Bharat rescued the just born fawn and brought it to his hermitage. Since then he began to foster the fawn with love and care. With time, Bharat's attachment grew for the fawn and whenever it went out of sight, he would feel perplexed. Soon King Bharat deserted everything for the love of the fawn. He even left his routine worship and meditation for it would be hard to concentrate whenever the fawn was near and at times when the fawn was out of sight, it worried Bharat and hence he could not concentrate.

But the fawn could not give up its natural instincts. When it grew up, one day, it happened to sight a herd of deer and mingled with it to find a mate of its own choice and since that day, it never returned to the hermitage. Separation from the deer proved fatal for the King Bharat. While dying his mind was fully concentrating on the thoughts of the deer which he had fostered with love and care. Because of it, Bharat took his next birth as a deer. But still he remembered his past life. So he deserted his herd and found a place in Shaalgraam where he passed his time eating dry grass and foliage.

In his next birth, Bharat was born in a cultured Brahmin family. In this birth also, he remembered his past lives. Since birth, Bharat knew all the rituals and scriptures and saw his soul in a transcendental way. Hence, even after his thread ceremony, he did not take up his education. Even the teachers failed to incite his interest in education. Bharat roamed here and there, clad in rags and was hence insulted by fellow Brahmins and village folk.

Thus Bharat remained indifferent to the others' treatment and sustained himself on whatever little he got to eat. After the demise of his father, his brothers made him work hard in the fields but gave little to eat. Because of his inertness, he was known as Jadabharat.

One night, when Jadabharat was guarding his fields, the king's commander-in-chief, Vrishatraaj caught him and took him away. The king wanted to sacrifice him before goddess Mahakali. But seeing the supreme Yogi being brought as a votive animal, goddess Mahakali expressed her wrath by decapitating the king and drank his blood.

In another incident later on, the king of Sauveer was travelling in a palanquin to visit sage Kapil for religious preaching. Incidentally, one man fell short to carry his palanquin, so the other carriers saw and caught Jadabharat to forcibly engage him in the work of carrying the palanquin. While walking, Jadabharat was taking care not to put his feet on any creature. So he was moving very slowly whereas other carriers were walking briskly. As a result of it, the palanquin was moving jerkily causing irritation to the king. The king enquired the carriers about the reasons of that jerky motion. The carriers informed him that it was because of the new recruit who is moving very slowly. The king shouted at Jadabharat- "You appear to be quite burly. Don't you have enough strength? Does a little work tire you?" Jadabharat said- "O king! Neither I am burly nor carrying your palanquin. I am neither tired nor there is any need for me to labour." The king said- "Apparently you are burly and my palanquin is also resting on your shoulder. Carrying a load always tires anybody. How are you different then from the others?"

Jadabharat said- "O king! First of all, tell me, what do you see directly? Your saying that I am carrying your palanquin is also meaningless. Now listen to what I say. Both my feet are resting on the earth. On the feet are thighs, and on the thighs is belly, on the belly are chest, shoulders and arms. Your palanquin is resting on the shoulders. What load am I carrying then? You are in the palanquin and I am on the earth are meaningless words. All the creatures, you and me are all carried by the five basic elements. Even our virtues are controlled by our action. Only action is born out of ignorance. The soul is pure, non-degradable, calm, intangible and beyond all nature. This same soul pervades all the creatures. It neither grows nor decays. Why did you say then that I am burly? If this palanquin that is resting on my shoulders-chest-belly-thighs and feet, could be a burden for me, it could also be a burden for you. Like this, all the living beings are carrying not only this palanquin but all the mountains, trees, houses and even the earth."

Saying this, Jadabharat became silent, still carrying the palanquin. The king at once got down from the palanquin and fell at Jadabharat's feet and said- "O Brahmin! Leave this palanquin and tell me why have you taken this guise. Who are you? What is the reason of your coming here? I am eager to know about you."

Jadabharat said- "I cannot tell what I am and for the reason why I came here, I can say only that coming and going are all done so that one can experience their result. The soul takes an incarnation only to experience the joy and sorrow as per its deeds. Why are you then enquiring specifically about the reason for my coming here?"

The king said- "The soul transmigrates from one body to another only because of its action. I want to hear from you preaching regarding 'who am I cannot be told'. O Brahmin! The soul that is eternal and experiences the results of its action is I. This mark of ego is not a cause of demerit in the soul."

Jadabharat said- "You are right that words do not cause any demerit in the soul. But the ego expressed in the form of words is the reason for demerit in soul. When the same and single soul stays in everybody, possessive words are then meaningless. You are the king. This is the palanquin. They are the carriers and those are the subjects. O king! None of these words has any meaning. This palanquin is made of the wood received from some tree. So tell me what it should be called as- a palanquin or wood. Nobody says that the king is sitting on a tree. It is because of specific construction that a heap of wood has assumed the shape of a palanquin. For the purpose of action, the same soul is identified physically as a man, a woman, a cow, a goat, a horse, an elephant, a bird or a tree. But in fact, the soul is none of them.

Things like wealth, king, kingdom, king's army and all other things that you possess are not fact. They are imaginations. For the subjects, you are king. For the son, you are father. For the wife, you are husband, and the father of her children. O king! Tell me, what should I address you as? Are you different from any of these nouns? Hence, always be careful while considering who am I? O king! The soul is so arranged in different roles that it is very difficult to tell specifically its real identity."

3.2.13 Jadabharat Preaches the King

The king said-"O Brahmin. I was going to see sage Kapil and have the preaching regarding excellent human virtues. But now, hearing your words, I feel that I need not go any further. You are an ocean of knowledge. Kindly preach me about human virtues."

Jadabharat said- "O king! For those who worship the Lord with a desire to receive wealth and kingdom, these things are a supreme goal. For those who want to attain heaven, action in the form of forming Yagya is the goal. But the supreme virtue is to act in a selfless way without having a desire for results. A Yogi must contemplate on that transcendental soul because it is the only means to merge with that supreme soul."

If the wealth is the goal while it is spent in religious activities. If the son is the goal, the father too might have been a goal for someone. Thus, there is no

supreme goal because everything exists for a time then ceases to exist. Hence the assumption of any physical thing as a supreme goal is meaningless. And consideration of soul separate from supreme soul is also futile.

The soul is one, all pervasive, impartial, pure, intangible and transcendental. It is free from the cycles of birth and death. It can neither be created nor be destroyed. It is supremely omniscient. Its manifestation in different life forms is temporary and identification of soul with living beings is baseless. Soul which is present in scores of living beings is basically single and same. Once one comes to know this, he doesn’t remain in darkness. Veil of ignorance then parts with him.

3.2.14 Tale of Ribhu and Nidaagh

Hearing Jadabharat’s words, the king fell in deep thoughts. Jadabharat then narrated the tale of Ribhu and Nidaagh. Once upon a time, in the beautiful town of Veernagar at the bank of the river Devika, there lived Nidaagh, the son of Pulastya. He was a disciple of Ribhu, the son of Brahma. Once, after a gap of one thousand years, Ribhu decided to see his disciple Nidaagh. So he arrived at Veernagar. Nidaagh welcomed and treated him warmly. In the night after dinner, they both sat together and Nidaagh asked him if he relished the food.

Ribhu said- "O Brahmin! Only those who feel hungry are sated. I have never experienced hunger or thirst. How then can I tell you about my satisfaction? Hunger and thirst are the virtues of the physical body. Health and satisfaction are the states of mind. O Brahmin! Ask this question only to those who have these virtues, not me. Even the qualities of food like deliciousness and insipidness are meaningless because a delicious edible item loses its taste after sometime and causes irritation instead of satisfaction. Hence you should strive to develop a sense of impartiality towards delicious and insipid food items. Also sense of impartiality is essential to attain salvation."

3.2.15 Ribhu Preaches Nidaagh

One thousand years after this incident, Ribhu once again decided to see his disciple Nidaagh. So he once again arrived in Veernagar. At that time, king of that town was leading a procession of his army. So there was a great crowd on the main road of the town. Nidaagh was carrying some worship materials from the forest but seeing a huge crowd on the road, he stood aside waiting for its dispersion. Meanwhile, Ribhu also arrived there. Seeing Nidaagh standing alone away from the crowd, Ribhu approached him and asked why he was standing there. Nidaagh said- "O Brahmin! Today, the king of our town had taken out a procession. So I am standing here waiting for the dispersion of crowd so that I can reach home and offer my worship."

Ribhu asked- " It appears from your words that you know everything about your town. Kindly tell me who is the king and who are the subjects?" Nidaagh said- "The one who is riding an elephant is the king and those who are following him on the ground are his subjects."

Ribhu said- "O Nidaagh! You have shown me the king and the elephant together but did not show their distinguishing symptoms separately. Who is the king among them and who is the elephant?" Nidaagh said- "The one who is above is the king and the one who is beneath is the elephant." Ribhu said- "Kindly elaborate what is above and what is beneath?" As soon as Ribhu finished his words, Nidaagh climbed on his shoulders and said- "Look, like the king, I am above you and like the elephant, you are beneath me." Ribhu said- "If you are like the king and I am like the elephant, kindly explain to me, who are you and who am I?"

Nidaagh at once climbed down and fell at Ribhu's feet and said- "Certainly, you are the great sage Ribhu." Ribhu said- "Yes, I am Ribhu and I have come to preach you out of affection." Thereafter Ribhu preached Nidaagh on the universality of soul and development of impartial view and left. By his preaching, Nidaagh's ignorance dispersed and he began to see all the creatures equal to impartially.

O king! Like the Brahmin who attains salvation because of impartial view, you also develop an impartial view regarding soul. Then you will not see anyone separate from you. Everything in this world is a manifestation of soul.

Parashar says- "Thus preached by Jadabharat, the king of Sauveer left his partial attitude. Jadabharat too received salvation when he realised the true knowledge."

3.3 Chapter 3 (Part 3)

This chapter contains 17 sections.

3.3.1 Description of Manvataras

Maitreya says- "O Gurudev! Now I wish to hear the description of all the Manvantaras and the Manus who ruled those Manvantaras."

Parashar says- "First Manu was self-begotten. After him five more Manus occurred namely Swarochish, Uttam, Taamas, Raivat and Chaakshush. All these Manus had occurred during the previous ages. The present Manu, Vaivasvat is the son of the Sun and this Manvantara is seventh."

In the Swarochish Manvantara, Paaraavat and Tushitgana were the gods. Vipaschit was Indra. Urjja, Stambh, Praan, Vaat, Vrishabh, Nitya and Parivaan were the Saptarishis. Chaitra and Kimpurush etc. were the sons of Manu.

Uttam was the Manu in Uttam Manvantara. Sushaanti was Indra with Sudhaam, Satya, Japa, Pratardan and Vashvarti were his Ganas. Seven sons of Vashishta were Saptarishis.

In Taamas Manvantara, there were four categories of the gods namely Supaar, Hari, Satya and Sudhi. Each of them had twenty-seven gods each. King Shibi was Indra during that Manvantara. Jyotirdhama, Prithu, Kaatya, Chaitra, Agni, Vanak and Peevar were Saptarishis.

During Raivat Manvantara, Vibhu was Indra. There were four categories of the gods namely Amitabh, Bhootrath, Vaikunth and Sumedha with fourteen gods each. Hiranyaroma, Vedshri, Urdhvabaahu, Vedbaahu, Sudama, Parjanya and Mahamuni were the Saptarishis. Four Manus Swarochish, Uttam, Taamas and Raivat are said to be the direct descendant of King Priyavrat.

During Chaakshush Manvantara, Indra's name was Manojav. Aapya, Prasoot, Bhavya, Prithuk and Lekh were the categories of gods each with eight deities. Sumedha, Viraja, Havishmaan, Uttam, Madhu, Atinaama and Sahishnu were the Saptarishis.

During the present Manvantara, the Sun's brilliant son Shraaddhdev is Manu. Aditya, Vasu and Rudra are the categories of the gods. Indra's name is Purandar. Vashishta, Kashyap, Atri, Jamadagni, Gautam, Vishwamitra and Bharadwaj are the Saptarishis. Present Manu has nine sons Ikshvaaku, Nrig, Drisht, Sharayaati, Narishyant, Naabhaag, Arisht, Karush and Prishadhra.

3.3.2 Birth of Savarni Manu and Description of the Next Manvataras

Maitreya says- "O sage, now kindly narrate about the Manvantaras that are to come in future."

Parashar says- Vishwakarma's daughter Sangya was the wife of Surya. They had three children, Manu, Yama and Yamani. Sangya once felt unable to bear the radiance of Surya. So, appointing Chhaya (her shadow) in the service of Surya, she herself migrated to the forest and began to observe a penance. Surya mistook Chhaya for Sangya and copulated with her. This resulted in the birth of three children- one more Manu, Shani and Tapati.

One day, getting angry for some unknown reason, Chhaya who was in the guise of Sangya cursed Yama. Only then Surya and Yama came to know about her real identity. Through meditation, Surya saw that the real Sangya was observing penance as a mare in the forest. Surya also arrived in the forest and mated with Sangya in horse form. Their mating resulted in the birth of two Ashwini kumars, Retahstrav and Revant. Thereafter, Surya brought Sangya to his abode where Vishwakarma dulled his radiance. Chhaya's son, Manu was a sibling of Manu; hence he came to be known as Saavarni.

During the next Manvantara, Saavarni will rule as Manu. Sutap, Amitabh and Mukhya will be the categories of gods each with twenty deities. Ditimaan, Gaalav, Rama, Krip, Ashwatthama, Rishishring and my son, Vedavyasa will be among the Saptarishis. By the grace of Lord Vishnu, Virochan's son Bali will occupy the throne of Indra.

Daksha Saavarni will be the ninth Manu. During that Manvantara, Paar, Maarichgarv and Sudharma will be the three categories of the gods with twelve deities each. Adbhut will be Indra. Savan, Dyutimaan, Bhavya, Vasu, Meghatithi, Jyotishmaan and Sata will be among the Saptarishis.

Brahma Saavarni will be the tenth Manu. During that Manvantara, Sudhaama and Vishuddh will be the two categories of gods with hundred deities each. Shanti will be Indra. Havishmaan, Sukrit, Satya, Tapomurti, Naabhaag, Apratimauja and Satyaketu will be among the Saptarishis.

Dharmasaavarni will be the eleventh Manu. Vihangam, Kaamgam and Nirvaangati will be the categories of gods each with thirty deities. Indra's name will be Vish. Nihsvar, Agniteja, Vayushmaan, Ghrini, Aaruni, Havishmaan and Anagh will be among the Saptarishis.

Rudraputra Saavarni will be the twelfth Manu. Ritudhaama will be Indra and Harit, Rohit, Sumna, Sukarma and Suraag will be the five categories of the gods each with ten deities. Tapasvi, Sutapa, Tapomurti, Taporati, Tapoghriti, Tapodyuti and Tapodhan will be among the Saptarishis.

Ruchi will be the thirteenth Manu. Sutrama, Sukarma and Sudharma will be the categories of the gods each with thirty-three deities. Devaspati will be Indra. Nirmoha, Tatvagarshi, Nishprakam, Nirutsuk, Ghritimaan, Avyay and Sutapa will be among the Saptarishis.

Bhaum will be the fourteenth Manu. Suchi will be Indra. Chaakshush, Pavitra, Kanishth, Bhraajik and Vaachaavriddh will be the five categories of the gods. Agnibaahu, Suchi, Shukra, Maagadh, Agnidhra, Yukt and Jit will be among the Saptarishis.

With the passing of these fourteen Manvantaras, a Kalpa that comprises of one thousand Yugas will come to an end. In Satayug, Lord Vishnu preaches about the metaphysical knowledge in Kapil's incarnation. In Tretayug, He destroys the evil doers and protects the world. In Dwaparyug, He divides the Vedas into four divisions. At the end of Kaliyug, Lord takes Kali incarnation and inspires corrupt people to religious path. Thus, Lord Vishnu maintains order in all the four Yugas and causes the creation, sustenance and ultimately destruction of the universe.

3.3.3 Description of Veda Vyasa and the Significance of BrahmaGyana

Maitreya says- "O Lord! How did God divide Vedas in the form of Vedavyasa during different Yugas?"

Parashar says- During each Dwaparyug, in every Kalpa, Lord Vishnu takes incarnation as Vedavyasa and effects the division of Vedas for the benefit of human beings.

During every Dwaparyug of the present Vaivasvat Manvantara, different Vyasas have divided the Vedas twenty-eight times. During the first Dwapar, Brahma himself had divided the Vedas. During the second Dwapar, Prajapati was Vedavyasa. During the third Dwapar, Shukracharya was Vedavyasa. During fourth Dwapar, Brihaspati acted as Vedavyasa.

Description of other sages who acted as Vedavyasa during the subsequent Dwapars is as follows- Surya- fifth Vedavyasa; Mrityu- sixth Vedavyasa, Indra- seventh Vedavyasa, Vashishta- eighth Vedavyasa, Saraswat- ninth Vedavyasa, Tridhama- tenth Vedavyasa, Trishikh- eleventh Vedavyasa, Bharadwaj- twelfth Vedavyasa, Antariksh- thirteenth Vedavyasa, Varani- fourteenth Vedavyasa. Names of next fourteen Vedavyasas are as follows- Trayyarun, Dhananjay, Krutunjay, Jay, Bharadwaj, Gautam, Haryatma, Vaajshrava, Trinbindhu, Riksh (Valmiki), Shakti, Parashar, Jaatukarn and Krishnadwaipayan. After Krishnadwaipayan, Drona's son, Ashwatthama will be the next Vedavyasa.

3.3.4 Expansion of the Branches of the Rg Veda

At the beginning of creation, Rigveda contained all the four Vedas with hundred thousand mantras. That Rigveda helped a lot in the propagation of ten kinds of Yagyas. Then during the twenty-eighth Dwapar, my son, Krishnadwaipayan effected the division of Rigveda in four Vedas. At the same time, he also trained four of his distinguished disciples in the study of Vedas. Each one of them was interested with the study of one particular Veda for infinite period of time. Accordingly, sage Pail mastered in Rigveda, Vaishampayan in Yajurveda, Jaimini in Samaveda and Sumantu in Atharvaveda. With the four Vedas, practice of Chaturhotra also came into being. Chaturhotra is now the main guiding feature of all kinds of Yagyas. Vyasa also established the Karmas of Adhvarayu by Yajurveda, of Hota by Rigveda, of Udgaata by Samaveda and of Brahma by Atharvaveda.

Sage Pail divided Rigveda into two divisions and taught them to two of his disciples- Indrapramiti and Vaashkal. In his term, Vaashkal divided his branch into four sub-branches and taught them to his disciples. Indrapramiti taught his branch of Rigveda to his talented son, sage Maandukeya. Thus branches and sub-branches of Rigveda grew substantially. In this tradition, Shaakalyavedamitra learnt a Samhita and divided it into five sub-branches. One of his disciples named Shaakpurn created three Samhitas whereas his another disciple created Nirukta Grantha. Vaashkal created three Samhitas and taught them to Kaalaayani, Gaargya and Tathaaja.

3.3.5 Description of the Branches of the Yajur Veda

A disciple of Vedavyasa named Vaishampayan created twenty-seven branches of Yajurveda and taught them to his disciples. He had a disciple Yagyavalkya who was the son of Brahmarat. At that time, all the sages together constituted a rule that whoever did not join their group within seven days on Mahameru would be held as a sinner equal to killing a Brahmin. Only Vaishampayan had violated that ruling. The curse of the sages did come true when Vaishampayan

killed his sleeping nephew accidentally. Then he asked his disciples to do away with his sin.

Yagyavalkya said- "Lord! All these Brahmins are extremely dull. I will alone do away with your sin." These boastful words infuriated Vaishampayan. He said- “You are insulting these Brahmins so at once, regurgitate whatever I have taught you." Yagyavalkya said- “Lord! I uttered these words out of devotion for you. Still you wish me to regurgitate what you have taught me. Here it is! Saying this, Yagyavalkya vomited out all the Shrutis of Yajurveda. Other disciples of Vaishampayan pecked them in the form of partridges. Since then, they came to be known as Taitriya Brahmins. Holding his breath, Yagyavalkya then started the worship of the Sun with a desire to regain Yajurveda.

Pleased by his prayers, Surya appeared before him in horse form and asked him to seek a boon. Yagyavalkya requested Surya to preach him those Shrutis of Yajurveda, which were not known even to his teacher, Vaishampayan. Surya preached him those Shrutis of Yajurveda, which were known as Aayaatyaam. The Brahmins who read these Shrutis came to be known as Vaaji. Nowadays, there are fifteen sub-branches of these Vaaji Shrutis, which were initially expounded by sage Yagyavalkya.

3.3.6 The Branches of the Sama Veda and the 18 Puranas

Sage Jaimini, a disciple of Vedavyasa, effected branches of Samaveda. Sage Jaimini had a son, Sumantu. Sumantu in turn had a son, Sukarma. Both of them studied a branch of Samaveda each. Sukarma divided his branch of Samaveda into sub-branches and taught them to his two disciples- Kaushalya Hiranyanaabh and Paushpinji. Hiranyanaabh had five hundred disciples. Upon receiving the knowledge of Samaveda branch from Hiranyanaabh, these disciples came to be known as Prachya Saamaag. Disciples of Paushpinji also effected divisions in Samaveda that they received from their teacher. One more disciple of Hiranyanaabh named Kriti taught twenty-four Samhitas of Samaveda to his disciples.

Sage Sumant taught Atharvaveda to his disciple Kabandh. Kabandh divided it into two parts and taught them to Devdarsh and Pathya respectively. A disciple of Pathya named Shaunak divided his Samhita into two parts and gave one of them to his disciple Vabhru and another to Saindhav. Saindhav’s disciple Munjikesh divided his Samhita into three parts. Presently, five Samhitas of Atharvaveda namely Nakshatrakalpa, Vedakalpa, Samhitakalpa, Aangiraskalpa and Shantikalpa are considered authentic.

Still unsatisfied by his achievement, sage Vedavyasa created Puraan Samhita and taught them to his famous disciple Romaharshan Suta. The Samhita that was created by Romaharshan was the base of three Samhitas- Akritvrana, Saavarni and Shaanspaayan created by Kashyapgotriya Brahmins. Vishnu Puraan is in a way a summation of these four Samhitas. There are in all eighteen Puraans. In chronological order, these are as follows- Brahma Puraan,

Padma Puraan, Vaishnav Puraan, Shaiv Puraan, Bhaagwat Puraan. Naarad Puraan, Markandeya Puraan, Agneya Puraan, Bhavishya Puraan, Brahmavaivart Puraan, Linga Puraan, Varaha Puraan, Skand Puraan, Vaaman Puraan, Kaurma Puraan, Matsya Puraan, Garud Puraan and Brahmaand Puraan.

3.3.7 Yama Gita

Maitreya says- "Lord! At the end of a life span, all the people come to be controlled by Yamaraaj. When they are bound to undergo scores of suffering in different kinds of hells. Kindly narrate about such action by which a human being gets free from the noose of Yamaraaj."

Parashar says- Youngest among the Pandavas, Nakul had once put the same question before Pitamaha Bheeshma. I am narrating what once Bheeshma had narrated to Nakul. Before sending Yamaraaj advises his agents to stay away from the devotee of Lord Krishna.

Yamaraaj is lord of all the human beings except Vaishnavas. Only Lord Vishnu is able to control Yamaraaj. About the devotee of Lord Vishnu, Yamaraaj says - He who does not deviate from his duties even in severest of crisis, who does not steal the wealth of others and kill animals is undoubtedly a devotee of Lord Vishnu. He who bears Lord Vishnu in his heart is a devotee of Lord Vishnu. He who is free from all kinds of ego and illusions and always wishes well for the others with pure and peaceful heart is a devotee of Lord Vishnu. Thus those who always contemplate on Lord Vishnu don't even fear death. Yama, Yamadoot, Yamapaash, Yamagana and even tortures of Yama are unable to hurt them.

3.3.8 Duties of Four Classes of Society

Maitreya says - "Lord! How should one worship Lord Vishnu? Kindly describe it to me.

Parashar says- King Sagar had asked the same thing from sage Aurv. I am narrating what sage Aurv had preached him.

Only those who fulfil their responsibilities and discharge their duties as per their class can worship Lord Vishnu. Those who shun activities like criticising others, backbiting, womanising, stealing others' wealth and violence; those who do not torture others and are always ready to serve the gods, Brahmins and teachers are able to please Lord Vishnu. Similarly, one should be always conscious regarding his duties as per his class.

Accordingly, a Brahmin should carry out Yagyas, study scriptures and should not ever try to hurt anybody. A Kshatriya must organise Yagyas and study scriptures. He should also make donations to Brahmins and take weapons in order to protect the earth. A Vaishya must earn his livelihood through cattle rearing, commerce and agriculture. Besides he should also organise Yagyas make donations and study scriptures. A Shudra is expected to earn his livelihood through handicrafts. Saluting learned people is equal to organising Yagya for a

Shudra. A Shudra may also make donations and oblations to appease his dead ancestors.

In the time of emergency, a Brahmin may shift to the occupations meant for Kshatriya and Vaishya. A Kshatriya may take the occupation of a Vaishya during emergency but none of them should ever take to the occupation of Shudra.

3.3.9 Description of Different Ashrams

Since birth till death, human life passes through different stages. For the purpose of simplicity in following these stages, our sages have made provisions for four stages or Ashrams in life namely Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanprastha and Sanyaas.

Upanayana Sanskara (thread ceremony) marks the beginning of education for the children born in Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya classes. For this purpose, a disciple must stay in his teacher's hermitage and observe celibacy strictly. There, he must serve his teacher and worship Surya and Agni. The disciple is expected never to disobey his teacher. Activities should be according to the teacher's guidelines. He should also make arrangements for the daily worship of his teacher in the way of collecting different materials like Havan saamagri, water, Kusha, flowers etc.

After the completion of education and paying all the dues, the disciple is ready to start second stage of his life that is Grihasthashram. For this he should first find a suitable girl from his class and make merry. During this stage, he should earn his livelihood by occupations ascribed for his class. He should please the gods by Yagyas, his ancestors by oblations, Prajapatis by producing children, spectres by offering sacrifices of cereals and society by love. Even the ascetic and celibates depend on married people for their daily bread. Hence married life or Grihasthashram is stated to be excellent among all the Ashrams.

A Grihastha must welcome and warmly treat the guests who arrive unexpectedly. Such a household from where a guest returns desperately never succeeds in religious matters. All the worship and Yagyas offered in such a household go futile. Hence it is not proper for the householder to show ego and abuse a guest otherwise he will have to expiate for it later.

A person must always be on alert to recognise the time when it is apt to take Vanprastha. When the children grow and begin to hold the responsibility of the household, one enters the third stage i.e. Vanprasthashram. So, leaving his wife in the shelter of his children or taking her with him, one should migrate to the forest and live a simple life sustaining on whatever little is available from the nature. This stage must be passed observing severe penance and restraining one's senses.

Sanyaasashram is the fourth stage of life. One should give up all activities related to Dharma, Artha and Kama in this stage. He should keep an impartial

view for all and cultivate a feeling of love for all the creatures. He should not hurt anybody by his words, actions or even thoughts. He should not stay in a village or town for more than five days. He should sustain his life on alms.

3.3.10 Customs and Consecrations

At the time of childbirth, it is the father's responsibility to carry out certain customs and consecrations for the child. First of all, Jatakarma Sanskara is carried out by which the newly born baby is included in the family. During this custom, a Brahmin couple is fed. It is also necessary for the couple that they should sit facing east while feeding. Thereafter, the parents should offer oblations to appease the gods and dead ancestors. Lumps made of barley flour, curd and berries should be offered as oblations. Similar consecrations are carried out at the time of children's marriage.

On the tenth day after the birth, the naming ceremony is carried out. Different castes and religion have different traditions regarding naming the newly born child. It is commonly seen that most of the children are named after the deities and gods. Still one should see that the name should not be meaningless, abusive or inauspicious. Practice of selecting exceptionally long and difficult to pronounce names should also be avoided.

The second stage in a child's life is when he or she begins education. In ancient times, thread ceremony used to be carried out and the children were sent to their teacher's hermitage for education. In modern age, thread ceremony is followed more or less in similar way as it used to be in the past. But children are not sent to Gurukul for education any more.

After completing education, a person should get married and run his own life. In the past, there had been elaborate rituals for the selection of suitable bride. Elders of the house used to select a proper match for the boy. Their choice in most cases depended on many attributes and bodily features of the girl. But in modern age, with increased interaction among the people, it is not possible to follow each and every custom related to selection of bride. Still one should take care not to marry in his mother's lineage for up to fifth generation and in his father's lineage up to seventh generation.

3.3.11 Description of Righteousness

A married man knows the importance of following a righteous discourse. Married life is like a penance in which a couple gives birth and raises next generation. A married man is expected to get up early in the morning and contemplate on religious things. It helps him to follow righteous discourse. He is expected to attend nature's call in natural environment away from his house. Soil is considered the best means to wash hands. It should be followed by cleansing of the body. He should then offer oblations wearing fresh clothes to sages, deities and his dead ancestors. Offering oblations to the Sun, worship of tutelary god and other deities follows then.

If the household is having some cattle, the head of the family should himself milk them and then wait for the guest. If and when a guest arrives, the head of the family must offer him a seat respectfully and treat him well with delicious food and pleasant talk. In Indian tradition, a guest is regarded equal to a deity. He should take food only after feeding the guest. Evening time has also elaborate rituals for a married man. First of all, after finishing daily chores, a married man must worship with peaceful mind. It is also good for his health to take food early in the evening and retire to a wooden bedstead. Night time is considered suitable period for enjoying carnal pleasure. Here too, a married man should enjoy intimacy with his wife only.

3.3.12 Sanctification after Birth and Death

Life on earth is like an infinite ocean in which birth appears like a bubble and death marks the bursting of that bubble after which it exists no more. Atmosphere of a household is said to be defiled when a birth or death occurs in it. There are different sanctifying customs to be carried out on both these occasions. After the birth of a son, the father should offer oblations to please the gods and his ancestors after taking a bath.

When a death occurs in a household, close relatives should take bath and carry the cadaver adorned with flowers and garlands outside the village or well-demarcated cremation ground for cremation. As per the religious tradition of the deceased, the body should either be consigned to the flames or buried. Then the relatives should again take bath in the pond or river facing south and offer watery oblations to the dead person. Since that day, Pindadaan (offering sweet balls made of barley flour, sesame seeds, jaggery and honey) should be done for ten days. On the fourth day of the cremation, ashes should be collected for immersion in holy places of pilgrimage.

The person who had carried out the cremation must abstain from intimacy for thirteen days. Outsiders are also barred from eating cereals from such a household where a death has occurred. For the different classes of Hindu society, this sanctifying period varies. For Brahmins, it is ten days, for Kshatriyas, it is twelve days, for Vaishyas, it is fifteen days and for Shudras, this period has been fixed for one month. On the same day in every subsequent month, oblations should be offered to the dead for one year.

3.3.13 Days for Monthly Oblations

A Shraadh carried out with devotion pleases the entire world including human beings, Brahma, Indra, Rudra, Ashwini Kumars, Surya, Agni, Vasugana, Marudgana, Vishwadeva, Pitragana, birds, animals, reptiles, sages and of course the dead ancestors. Moonless and eighth day in the darker phase of every lunar month are considered the best days for offering oblations to the dead ancestors.

Apart from these two, third day in the brighter phase of Vaishaakh, ninth day in brighter phase of Kartik, thirteenth day in the darker phase of Bhaadrapad and

Amavasya of Maagh are also considered excellent. During lunar and solar eclipses also, oblations should be made with water and sesame seeds. If Shatabhisha Nakshatra occurs on Amavasya of Maagh, it is considered an excellent conjugation for offering oblations to dead ancestors. Bathing in rivers like Ganga, Sutlej, Yamuna, Vipaasha, Saraswati, Gomti, Godavari etc. while making oblations is also said to be extremely benefiting. It is not necessary also to show great pomp and show while making oblations. If one doesn't have enough money to offer oblations properly, he may simply pray the Sun saying that 'he is not fortunate enough to have wealth'. Thus, his ancestors would be pleased by his devotion alone.

3.3.14 Method for Oblations

While making oblations to the dead ancestors, one should feed his near and dear ones as well as learned Brahmins who respect their parents. Intimacy with women is barred for those who have taken food in an oblation. Any guest who happens to arrive unexpectedly and uninvited should be treated well. Before feeding, plain cereals should be offered thrice to the fire reciting following hymns.

AGNAYE KAVYA VAAHAANAYE SWAHAA |
SOMAAY PITRAMATE SWAHAA |
VAIVASVATAAY SWAAHA ||

Remaining cereals then should be served with the food to the Brahmins and some parts should also be cast on earth and water should be offered on them.

After the feast, the Brahmins should be seen off with respect. The host should then take food along with his family. Anger over enthusiasm and walking on the street is forbidden for the host during oblation period.

3.3.15 Do's and Don't during Oblation

Oblation with flesh of fish, rabbit, mongoose, hog, deer, ram and cereals cause extreme satisfaction for the ancestors. But in modern Kaliyug, all types of flesh are forbidden in oblation rituals. Only cereals, milk, honey, etc. are allowed. Offering of oblation in Gaya (a place of pilgrimage in Bihar) is said to salve all the ancestors. Barley, wheat, rice, sesame seeds, peas, and mustard are the common cereals and grains used in oblations.

Offering of oblation is a sacred affair. During the procedure, care should be taken that an eunuch, Chandaal, sinner, imposter, patient, cock, dog, a naked person, monkey, pigs, a woman in menses, and anybody in whose house a death or birth has occurred don't see the performer otherwise neither the deities nor the ancestors would accept the oblations. Water used in oblation should also be free from odour and foam. Milk of camel, sheep, doe and buffalo should not be used in oblations. Before beginning the ritual, drive out the evil

spirits from the selected piece of land. It should be cut off from outside influences through enclosures.

3.3.16 The Battle of Gods and Demons

Rig, Sama and Yajurveda are like the clothes of Hindu society. Those who give them up are in fact naked. This statement is endorsed by the following tale.

Once upon a time, a battle occurred between the demons and the gods. It lasted for one hundred years at the end of which period, the demons defeated the gods. The humiliated gods reached Ksheersagar and prayed Lord Vishnu. Pleased by their prayers, Lord Vishnu appeared before the gods. All the gods greeted Him and said- "O Lord! In sheer violation of Brahma's dictate, formidable demons have kidnapped even our due shares offered in the oblations. Protect us from the onslaught of the demons. We cannot fill them because they abide by their religion. Kindly show us a way to kill the demons."

Hearing the pleas of the gods, Lord Vishnu produced Mayamoha from His body and giving them to the gods, said- "Mayamoha will cause illusion in the minds of the demons. The illusion will influence the demons to violate the path shown by the Vedas. You can kill them after that". Saying this, the Lord disappeared. The gods took Mayamoha and reached the abode of the demons.

3.3.17 Dialogue of Mayamoha with Demons

Mayamoha was produced in a naked form. It reached the bank of Narmada and saw the demons observing penance there. The naked Mayamoha then approached them and said in a sweet voice- " O demons! What is the purpose of your penance?" The demons said- "We are observing penance to achieve the metaphysical world." Mayamoha said- "If you long for salvation, do as I suggest. Follow the religion which is like an open gate to salvation." With such sweet talk, Mayamoha began to illumine the demons' mind. Mayamoha confused them further saying- "O demons, if you long for salvation or a place in the heaven, give up sacrificing animals and attain enlightenment. It is wrong notion to say that violence is the religious path. Offering of oblations in fire is also childish. Even an animal which eats green grass is better than Indra who is obliged to eat wood despite attaining that position after hundreds of great Yagyas. If an animal which is sacrificed in Yagya attains heaven, performer of Yagya would have killed his own father."

Thus with these witty talks, Mayamoha deviated the demons from the righteous path because of which they lost interest in Vedas. Once it was achieved, the gods attacked the demons with full preparations. Ultimately, many demons were killed whereas those who remained came to be known as naked because they no longer followed the teachings of Vedas. Thus, anybody who does not practice the teachings of Vedas in his life is known as naked. Those who do not take to Vanprastha or Sanyaas after the completion of Grihasthashram are naked.

Tale of Shatadhanu- In the ancient times there was a king named Shatadhanu. His queen Shaivya was a righteous and religious woman. The king and the queen had worshipped Lord Vishnu observing severe penance. On the full moon day in the month of Kartik when the king and queen came out of the Ganges after taking bath, they happened to sight an imposter Brahmin who was coming from the opposite direction. The Brahmin was a friend of the king's teacher. So, the king treated the Brahmin with respect. But his chaste wife did not show any respect for the imposter and kept silent all through the talk. She then had a sight of the Sun to expiate for the meeting with an imposter. On their return to the palace the king and the queen worshipped Lord Vishnu with proper rituals.

In due course, the king died. The queen also committed Sati. Since the king had committed the sin of talking to an imposter during his penance the king had committed the sin of talking to an imposter during his penance, he took birth in a dog form whereas queen Shaivya took birth as the daughter of a Kashi king. She was extremely beautiful and knew everything about her previous birth. When her father decided to marry her off, she requestfully refused for she knew that her previous birth husband was roaming the streets and lanes of Vidisha in a dog form.

The princess of Kashi then reached Vidisha and found out that dog was in fact King Shatadhanu. She fed the dog with delicious food eating which the dog began to wag its tail and show humility before the princess. The princess saluted the dog and narrated the whole thing to it that it was because of his sin of talking to an imposter during penance that he had to take birth as a dog.

Thus, reminded by the princess, the dog contemplated for long on the events of his previous birth. He grew so sad that he gave up the dog form on the outskirts of the town. In his next birth however he was born as a jackal. Again the princess came to know that the jackal was King Shatadhanu and asked him whether he continued to talk to the imposter after their conversation in the previous birth? Only then, King Shatadhanu came to realise his mistake. He then observed fast till death. But in his next birth, he was born as a wolf. Again the princess reminded him of his previous birth. The king's became a vulture in his next birth. After that, he took birth in crow form and then as a peacock. During that time, King Janak was organising an Ashwamedha Yagya. In the Yagya, the peacock was also given a ceremonial bath by the princess. During the bath, the princess reminded the peacock (King Shatadhanu) of his previous birth, the peacock too died and took next birth as the son of King Janak.

It was only after the birth of King Janak's son that the princess told her father to organise a Swayamvara for her. In the Swayamvara, the prince also arrived. The princess accepted him respectfully as her husband.

3.4 Chapter 4 (Part 4)

This chapter contains 12 sections.

3.4.1 Description of Vaivasvat Manu's Lineage

Lineage of Vaivasvat Manu finds its origin at Brahma. Brahma was the first to appear from Lord Vishnu who is the primitive cause for the whole creation. From the right hand thumb of Brahma, Daksha Prajapati appeared. Daksha produced Aditi and Aditi produced Vivasvaan. Manu was the son of Vivasvaan. Ikshvaaku, Nrig, Grishth, Sharayaati, Narishyant, Pranshu, Naabhaag, Dishta, Karup and Prishadhra are the ten sons of Manu.

With a desire for a son Manu organised a Yagya to please the deities Mitra and Varun. But during the Yagya because of a wrong resolution of oblator, a daughter named Ila was born to them. But by the grace of Mitra-Varun, she got masculine appearance and a name Sudyumna. In later course by the wrath of Lord Shiva, Sudyumna was converted into a woman. In woman form when Sudyumna was roaming near the hermitage of Buddha, the son of Chandrama, her beauty infatuated Buddha. As a result of their union, a son Pururava was born. Even after the birth of Pururava, Sudyumna could not give up his temptation to be a man again. Hence, learned sages organised a Yagya for Sudyumna and got him converted into a man again. In masculine form, Sudyumna produced three sons- Utkal, Gaya and Vinat. Manu had presented a town named Prathishtha to Sudyumna, which he later on presented to Pururava.

Pururava's progenies spread in all directions and acquired Kshatriya caste. Manu's son, Prishadhra became a Shudra because of killing a cow of his teacher. Manu's another son, Karush produced an exceptionally strong Kshatriya named Kaarush. Lineage of Dishta grew as follows- Naabhaag- Balbandhan- Kirtimaan- Vatsapreeti-Praanshu- Prajapati- Khanitra- Chaakshush- Vimbha- Vivimbhak- Khaninetra- Ativibhuti- Karandham- Avikshit- Marut.

Marut had a son, Narishyant. Lineage of Narishyant grew as follows- Dama- Rajvardhan- Suvriddhi- Keval- Sughritti- Nara- Chandra- Keval- Bandhumaan- Veghvaan- Buddha- Trinvindu. Trinvindu had a daughter Ilavila and a son Vishal. Vishal in later course founded Vishaala.

Lineage of Vishal grew as follows- Hemchandra- Chandra- Dhumraksh- Srinjay- Sahadev- Krishasva- Somadutta- Janmejaya- Sumati.

Manu' son Sharayaati had a daughter Sukanya who was married to sage Chyavan in peculiar circumstances. Aanart was the son of Sharayaati. Aanart had a son Raivat who founded his capital at Kushasthali and ruled his kingdom on earth. Raivat had one hundred sons, the eldest among whom was Kakudmi. He had a daughter Revati. Raivat took Revati with him and approached Brahma who asked about a suitable match for her. At that time, Gandharvas were singing near Brahma. Raivat listened to their songs intently and forgot about the passage of time. Many ages passed like that but Raivat felt as if only an hour had passed. When the Gandharvas stopped singing, Raivat once again

asked Brahma about a suitable match for Revati. Brahma asked Raivat about his own choices first. Raivat counted the names of many deserving princes and kings all of whom belonged to earth.

Brahma said smiling- "No one even in the progeny of these people is alive on earth because here listening to the Gandharvas songs you have passed four ages. Presently even the age of eighteenth Manu is about to end on earth and Kaliyug is about to start." These words frightened Raivat who greeted Brahma and asked- "O Lord! Now tell me whom should I marry Revati to?" Brahma said- "That unborn all pervasive Parmeshwar Lord Vishnu had taken an incarnation on earth. O king! Your capital at Kushasthali which was equal to Indra's abode Amravati is now Dwarkapuri. In that Dwarkapuri, stays Baldev who is a part of Lord Vishnu. Marry this daughter to him because she is a jewel among the women folk and Baldev is praised all over the world by all. Hence only he deserves to be your son-in-law."

Hearing the verdict of Brahma, Prajapati Raivat descended on the earth and saw that an amazing transformation had taken place in the appearance of people who were now smaller in stature, ugly, dull and devoid of strength. Even his capital Kushasthali had acquired a new appearance and was now known as Dwarkapuri. Raivat found out Baldev and married his granddaughter Revati to him. But Revati appeared quite large and taller in stature than Baldev because of age difference. Baldev pressed her slightly with anterior part of his plough and she assumed a stature equal to normal women. After marrying Revati to Baldev, Raivat migrated to the Himalayas to observe penance.

3.4.2 Description of Ikshvaku's Lineage

Ikshvaaku was born from the nostril of Manu as a result of sudden sneezing. Ikshvaaku had hundred sons among whom Vikukshi, Nimi and Danda were prominent. Once Ikshvaaku organised a Shraadh. For the purpose of feeding Brahmins, he ordered his son Vikukshi to bring fresh meat of wild animals. Taking his bow and arrows, Vikukshi set out for the forest and hunted many deer and rabbits. Towards noon, he felt tired and hungry and hence ate one rabbit from the stock. Then he reached the capital and handed over the remaining flesh to his father.

But the sage Vashishta who was conducting the Shraadh revealed the truth to Manu. Thus Vikukshi got the name of Shashaad and was expelled by his father. Shashaad in later course had a son, Puranjay.

In the past a fierce battle had taken place between the demons and the gods. The demons defeated the gods who approached Lord Vishnu for help. Lord Vishnu said-"I am aware of your desire. I will appear in he body of Shashaad's son Puranjay to kill the demons. But it is your responsibility to convince him for the battle."

The gods approached Puranjay and requested-"O great among the Kshatriyas! Kindly help us to defeat our enemies." Puranjay said-"Shatkratu is Indra. If I fight the battle riding his shoulder, I will be able to kill the demons."

The gods accepted his condition. Indra took the guise of the bull riding which Puranjay killed the demons because Lord Vishnu had partially arrived in his body. Since then Puranjay got the name Kakutsth. He had a son Aneyna. Lineage of Aneyna grew as follows- Aneyna- Prithu- Vishtrabhva-Chaandrayuvnashva- Shaavasta. Shaavasta founded the town of Shaavasti (modern Shraavasti). Lineage of Shaavasta continued as follows- Shaavasta-Vrihadashva- Kuvalayaashva- Dridaashva- Tandraashva- Kapilaashva.

For a long time, Yuvanashva did not have a child. So, he organised a Putreshti Yagya in the auspices of learned sages. The Yagya lasted for a whole day. At mid-night when the Yagya ended, sages fell asleep because of tiredness keeping the urn of Yagya water near the altar. The water had been empowered with sacred mantras. Meanwhile the thirsty king came there and drank that water from the urn. When the sages awakened, they enquired about the water in the urn. Yuvanashva told them that he had himself drunk it. The sages told that as the water had been empowered with sacred mantras and was meant for the queen in order to make her conceive. Hence the king instead of the queen will conceive now. As a result Yuvanashva conceived and in due course gave birth to a child from his right armpit. But the child’s birth did not kill the king. The baby was Mandhaata. In due course Mandhaata ruled the entire earth, which was divided into seven islands.

Mandhaata married Bindumati, the daughter of Shatabindu. They had three sons- Purukutsa, Ambareesh, and Muchukunda. They also had fifty daughters. When all the daughters grew young a sage Saubhari arrived in the palace and requested Mandhaata to marry one of his daughters to him. The sage appeared old and frail. So, Mandhaata hesitated and tried to send him off making many excuses. The sage assured him about his physical abilities. But still the king felt hesitant and said-“O sage, it is our tradition that we marry our daughter only to he whom our daughter chooses as her husband. Your request is beyond our desires."

Hearing Mandhaata’s word sage considered for a moment and said-"All right O king! Kindly instruct the eunuch who guards the quarters of your daughters to escort me there." Fearing a curse from the sage, Mandhaata instructed the eunuchs to escort him into the quarters of his daughters. While entering the quarters, the sage assumed the appearance of an extremely handsome Gandharva. So, when he arrived there, a row started among the girls as to who would choose him as her husband first. Each one of them claimed that she had first chosen him. Thus all the daughters of Mandhaata chose sage Saubhari as their husband.

When the eunuchs informed the king about this development, he fell in deep thoughts how it could happen. But still he was bound by his promise so he had no choice but to marry all his daughters to sage Saubhari. Marrying all the fifty girls, sage Saubhari brought them to his hermitage. Calling Vishwakarma, he instructed him to build separate castles for each of his wives. In no time, Vishwakarma erected fifty beautiful palaces in a row. Each one of them had ample spacious and airy rooms, surrounded by beautiful gardens. Since then, all the girls occupied those palaces and began to live there. Every kind of luxury and food was available to them.

One day, drawn by the love for his daughters, King Mandhaata decided to visit Saubhari's Ashram. But in place of Ashram, he found a row of beautiful palaces. There, he met his daughters and enquired about their well being. The daughters informed him that they were happy to live with the sage and that their husband was capable enough to provide them with all the luxuries. But still they remembered their native place. Each of the girl also expressed one grief that her husband enjoyed intimacy with her at all times and did not share time with her other sisters. These words of the girls surprised the king. Ultimately he met Saubhari and worshipping him he said-"O lord! It is the result of your severe penance that you are able to keep all the fifty girls happy." Staying there for a few days, the king returned.

In due course, the daughters of Mandhaata gave birth to one hundred and fifty sons. Those sons grew up and produced their progeny. At that time sage Saubhari thought- 'I have seen the birth of my sons. Now they have their own sons. If I stay there, I will long to see my great-grandchildren. Desires do not end till death. Acquiring a human body is in itself a great sorrow. I have received enough in life, enjoyed intimacy with fifty princesses. If I keep more desires, I will receive nothing but sorrow. Hence I should take to the penance of Lord Vishnu.'

Thinking that way, sage Saubhari migrated to the forest along with his fifty wives. There they conducted Yagyas and passed their time worshipping Lord Vishnu.

3.4.3 Progeny of Mandhatr, Ascend of Trishanku to Heaven and Birth of Sagar

Once upon a time Gandharvas of collective name Mauneya defeated the Nagas and snatched all their wealth and powers. The Nagas prayed Lord Vishnu to rescue them. Lord Vishnu told them that he would appear in Mandhaata's son Purukutsa and kill the Gandharvas. Afterwards Narmada brought Purukutsa to Rasaatal where Lord Vishnu appeared in his body. Thus having the strength of Lord Vishnu, Purukutsa defeated and killed the Gandharvas. Pleased by the action of Narmada, the Nagas blessed her with a boon that whoever remembered her would have no fear of snake venom and Purukutsa that he would have an immortal son.

Purukutsa and Narmada had a son Trasadasyu. Lineage of Trasadasyu continued as follows- Trasadasyu- Anaranya- Vrihadashva- Haryashva- Hasta- Sumana- Tridhanva- Trayaruni and Satyavrat. Satyavrat became famous as Trishanku in later course. By the curse of a sage, Trishanku had become a Chandaal. Once a drought occurred for twelve long years. During that drought, to get rid from this condition of Chandaal and feed sage Vishwamitra, Trishanku used to tie a whole skinned deer to a Banyan tree on the bank of the river Ganges. Pleased by his selfless service, sage Vishwamitra sent Trishanku to the heaven with his ephemeral body.

Lineage of Trishanku grew as follows- Trishanku- Harishchandra- Rohitashva- Harit- Chanchu- Vijay and Vasudev. Vijay had a son Ruruk. Ruruk's son was Vrik who had a son Baahu. Baahu had two queens. After a long time of their marriage, Baahu's queen consort conceived a son. But the circumstances took a strange turn. Baahu's enemies together attacked his kingdom and defeated him. The defeated king migrated to the forest along with his queens and began to live at the hermitage of sage Aurv. Very soon, King Baahu died of old age. His queen consort also wanted to commit Sati but sage Aurv prevented her from doing so. After sometime getting envious of her fortune, the other queen deceitfully fed her with poison. But the poison could not harm the foetus, which stayed unborn for a period of seven years because of poison's effect.

Staying at the hermitage of sage Aurv, the queen consort gave birth to a son. Since the child was born with the effect of the poison, Sage Aurv named him as Sagar. Sagar began to grow in he hermitage in natural surrounding. One day he asked his mother about his father. The queen narrated the whole incident to him. Sagar then and there took an oath to exterminate the Kshatriyas who had been the cause of his father's death. Acting as per his oath, Sagar destroyed Haihaya Kshatriyas whereas Shak Kshatriyas got their heads shaven out of fear. Since those Kshatriyas had given up their religion, hence Brahmins boycotted them. As a result they became Malechchha. Thereafter King Sagar returned to his capital and ruled the earth.

3.4.4 Description of Suryavansh

King Sagar had two queens, Sumati, the daughter of Kashyap and Keshini, the daughter of Vidarbha's king. Keshini had a son Asmanjas whereas Sumati had sixty thousand sons. Anshuman was the son of Asmanjas. Asmanjas was very whimsical since his childhood. Even in his youth, he did not change his behaviour. Hence King Sagar had abandoned Asmanjas. But the things did not improve for Sagar because even his sixty thousand sons followed the footsteps of Asmanjas.

The gods one-day approached sage Kapil who was a partial incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Greeting him, they said- "If the sixty thousand sons of Sagar continued on their whimsical way, the earth would not remain suitable for living." Sage Kapil assured the gods that the sixty thousand sons of Sagar would meet their

fate very soon. By the instigation of sage Kapil, King Sagar organised an Ashwamedha Yagya.

The sixty thousand princes also followed the horse guarding it. But somehow Indra managed to kidnap the horse and tethered it at the hermitage of sage Kapil. The sixty thousand princes searched for the horse and following the footprints, they also reached the hermitage. There they found the horse and also a sage in deep meditation. Thinking that the sage might have been responsible for abduction of the horse they began to abuse him. As soon as sage Kapil disturbed by the abuses opened his eyes, a flame appeared and incinerated all the sixty thousand princes. When King Sagar came to know about this incident, he sent Anshuman to bring back that horse. Anshuman also reached the hermitage and greeted sage Kapil with respect. Pleased by his politeness, sage Kapil blessed Anshuman and instructed him to take the horse away with him. He also asked him to seek a boon. As the boon, Anshuman only sought the salvation for his sixty thousand dead uncles. Sage Kapil assured Anshuman that his ancestors would certainly attain to the heaven but only after a long wait and that his grandson Bhagirath would bring the Ganges onto the earth and that the Ganges' waters would wash the ashes of his ancestors to the ocean and cause their salvation.

Thus blessed by the sae Kapil, Anshuman returned to the capital with the horse in order to help his grand father finish the Yagya. Anshuman had a son Dileep. Dileep's son was Bhagirath who observed severe penance and pleased Ganga to descend on the earth. Since the Ganges had descended on earth because of Bhagirath's penance, she also got a name Bhagirathi.

The lineage of Bhagirath grew as follows- Bhagirath- Suhotra- Shruti- Naabhaag- Ambareesh- Sindhudweep- Ayutayu- Rituparn- Sarvakaam- Sudas and Saudas.

One day, King Saudas went hunting in the forests. There he spotted a pair of the tigers. They were actually a tiger and a tigress in mating. Saudas killed one of them by his arrow, while the other turned into a demon and threatening of an avenge disappeared from the scene.

In due course, King Saudas organised a Yagya in the auspices of sage Vashishta. Towards the end of Yagya, sage Vashishta went away to take bath. Meanwhile the same demon arrived there in the guise of Vashishta and expressed his desire to eat non-vegetarian food. Then the demon arrived before the king in the guise of the cook. The king ordered him to cook meat for the sage. The cook cooked human flesh and served it before the sage. Sage Vashishta knew that the food contained human flesh. He cursed the king in anger to be a demon. Within three days, King Saudas became a demon and began to roam in the forests. Since then he ate the humans only.

One day, Saudas in demon form saw Muni who was in the process of mating his wife. The demon caught and ate the Muni neglecting all the cries and wailing of

his wife. The Brahmani angrily cursed the demon that as her husband had been killed while he was about to sate his carnal lust similarly he would also die right in the same process.

King Saudas remained in the demon's form for twelve more years. After that he recovered from the curse and began to rule like a pious king. One day, King Saudas saw the queen in an amorous condition and an impulse of carnal pleasure ran within his body. He made advances to satisfy his lust but the queen who knew everything about the curse stopped him reminding him of the curse. Since then the king stuck to celibacy. Since the king had no son, he allowed his queen Madayanti to conceive a child with the help of sage Vashishta. The queen did conceive but the foetus remained unborn for seven years at length. At last the irritated queen hit her foetus with a stone. This resulted in the birth of child at once. The child was named Ashmak. The lineage of Ashmak grew as follows: Ashmak- Moolak- Dasharath- Ilivil- Vishvasah and Khatwang. Khatwang had killed many formidable demons fighting by the side of the gods. Pleased by his gallantry, the gods wanted to grant him a boon. Khatwang wanted to know how long would live more. The gods told him that he would live for one Muhurta more. Hearing this, Khatwang came back on earth and prayed Lord Vishnu to take him in His refuge. At last he did annihilated with Lord Vishnu.

Lineage of Khatwang grew as follows-Khatwang- Deerghbahu- Raghu- Aja and Dasharath. King Dasharath had three queens who gave birth to four sons-Rama, Lakshmana, Bharat and Shatrughana.

Rama was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. His life too had lot of ups and downs. After being trained in archery, He and Lakshmana spent most of their boyhood time in the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra guarding his Yagyas from the demons. After that when Vishwamitra was taking them to Mithila Lord Rama salved Ahilya who had been converted into a stone by the curse of her husband sage Gautam. In Mithila, Lord Rama broke the bow of Lord Shiva and won Sita as His wife. When they returned to Ayodhya, King Dasharath decided to crown Rama as the new king. But misguided by Manthara, queen Kaikeyee stubbornly sought that her son Bharat should be crowned as the new king whereas Rama should be sent on an exile for fourteen years. Bounded by his promises that he had made to Kaikeyee earlier, King Dasharath had no choice but to accept her demands.

Thus to keep His father's words, Lord Rama accepted the exile. Sita and Lakshmana also followed His steps. In the forests, the demon king Ravan deceitfully abducted Sita. It was followed by meeting of Rama with Hanumana and Sugreev, killing of Baali- Sugreev's brother, finding of Sita by Hanumana in Lanka, bridging of the sea that separated Lanka, fierce battle with the demons and ultimately killing of Ravan by Lord Rama. After the completion of exile period Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya and ruled there for twelve years.

Lord Rama had two sons- Lava and Kusha. Lineage of Kusha grew as follows- Kusha- Atithi- Nishadh- Anal- Nabh- Pundareek- Kshemdhanwa- Devaneek- Ahinaka- Ruru- Pariyatrak- Deval- Vanchal- Ulka- Vajranabha- Shankhan- Yushhitashva- Vishvasaha- Hiranyanaam- Pushya- Dhruvsandhi- Sudarshan- Agnivarn- Shighrag- Maru- Prasushrut- Susandhi- Amarsh- Sahaswan and Vishvabhav. Vishvabhav had a son Brihdal who was killed by Abhimanyu in the battle of Mahabharat.

3.4.5 Tale of Nimi and Description of his Lineage

Ikshvaku's son Nimi once decided to organise a Yagya that was to last for one thousand years. He also wanted the sage Vashishta to guide the Yagya. But Indra had already booked Vashishta for a period of five hundred years. So sage Vashishta expressed his inability to conduct any other Yagya till the completion of that period and requested the king to wait till he was free from Indra's obligations. Nimi kept quite at that time. Taking his silence as an approval, the sage began the Yagya for Indra. But the king meanwhile started Yagya in the auspices of other sages like Gautam etc.

At the completion of Yagya for Indra, sage Vashishta hurried back to the earth to conduct Yagya for King Nimi. But here he found that a Yagya was already in progression. This infuriated the sage to the extent that he poured down curse on Nimi, who was sleeping at that time, to lose his body at once. When the king learned about the curse and that he was cursed in sleep, he cursed the sage in retaliation to lose his body at once before giving up his own body. By the curse of Nimi, Vashishta's body was destroyed but he himself entered the semen of Mitravarun. Thereafter, one day Mitravarun happened to sea the elf Urvashi. Her amorous beauty caused the ejaculation of his semen spontaneously. With ejaculated semen, sage Vashishta also came out and acquired a new body.

On the other hand, at end of Yagya when the gods appeared to accept their due share from the offerings, the sages prayed them to grant Nimi some boon. Nimi however sought nothing in boon but expressed his desire to stay in eyes of the people forever. The gods granted that desire. Before that nobody had ever blinked his eyes. Blinking of eyes came into practice because Nimi stays there. In order to save the kingdom from anarchy, the sages churned the dead body of Nimi with a stick of Bombax tree and produced a son. That son came to known as Janak. Since he was born from the dead body of his father, the boy also came to be known as Vaideha. Lineage of Janak continued as follows: Janak- Udavasu- Nandivardhan- Suketu- Devrat- Brihadukth- Mahaveerya- Sudhriti- Dhrishtketu- Haryashva- Manu- Prateet- Kritrath- Devbheed- Vibudh- Mahadhriti- Kritraj- Maharoma- Suvarnaroma- Hrasyaroma and Seerdhvaj. With a desire of a son, Seerdhvaj was once ploughing the earth when he stumbled upon a pitcher. In the pitcher, he found a beautiful baby whom he named as Sita.

3.4.6 Description of Somavansh and the Tale of Pururava

The creator of the world, Brahma had a son named Atri. Chandrama was the son of Atri. Once Chandrama organised a Rajsuya Yagya and received great

powers. Afterwards blinded by his powers, Chandrama kidnapped Tara, the wife of Brihaspati. Even his grandfather Brahma tried to dissuade him from committing such a grave crime but Chandrama was not to listen to anybody. Because his hostility with Brihaspati, the teacher of the demons Shukra was also assisting Chandrama. At that moment of need, only Rudra came forward to help Brihaspati. A fierce battle followed between Chandrama and Rudra. The gods were helping Brihaspati while because of Shukra, the demons fought from the side of Chandrama. Soon the battle assumed the proportion of a war that perplexed the entire world. At last, Lord Vishnu mediated to end the battle and helped Brihaspati to get his wife back. By that time Tara had conceived a child. Seeing her condition Brihaspati instigated Tara to abort the baby. Tara aborted the baby amidst some shrubs but it did not die. Instead, his brilliance dulled even the radiance of the gods.

The baby was so beautiful that both Brihaspati and Chandrama were eager to accept him. To settle the matter, Brahma asked Tara about the paternity of the child. Feeling shy, Tara revealed that Chandrama was the father of the child. Then Brahma himself adopted the child and named him as Buddha.

When he grew young, Buddha produced Pururava from Illa. Pururava was very magnanimous and handsome. Once an elf Urvashi happened to see him and at once fell in love. She then approached Pururava. Her beauty enchanted Pururava also. He requested the elf to stay with him. But Urvashi stipulated that she might stay with him if he agreed to follow her two conditions that he would never drive the two sheep, which were like her children away from her bed and that he would never undress before her in visible light. Pururava accepted both the conditions.

Since then Pururava began to live with Urvashi. Together they enjoyed their physical intimacy for sixty thousand years. Their love grew so much that even Urvashi forgot those heavenly comforts that she used to enjoy once. But because of her absence, even the heaven appeared more dreaded than hell.

At last, one Vishvavasu who knew about the conditions stole one sheep from their bedroom and flew away. Hearing the cries of the sheep, Urvashi got up in anxiety and shouted who was stealing her son. But Pururava pretended as if asleep for the fear of being seen naked. As the fuss grew further, he could no more contain himself and ran after the thief. Right at that moment, the Gandharvas produced intense lightning illuminating the whole scene. As a result, Urvashi saw Pururava in a naked state and at once left his palace to her heavenly abode for now both of her conditions had been violated. Pururava could not tolerate the separation of Urvashi. He began to roam here and there in that bare condition like a mad. Thus roaming he reached at Kamal Sarovar in Kurukshetra where he saw Urvashi with four other elves. Seeing Urvashi Pururava began to behave madly. It was impossible for him to control his sensual desires even in the presence of other elves. But Urvashi stopped him

saying that she was expecting an issue and after a year, she will give birth to his child. She also promised at that time she will stay with him for a night.

After a year King Pururava once again reached that place where Urvashi handed over his son Aayu. As per her promise she also stayed with Pururava for a night and consequently in later course gave birth to five more sons. Urvashi informed Pururava that because of their love Gandharvas wished to bless him with a boon. Pururava sought a life-long union with Urvashi. Gandharvas presented him with an altar and instructed to conduct regular Yagyas properly. Then all of his desires would come true, the Gandharvas assured Pururava. But King Pururava left that altar in the forest and returned to his capital. At mid-night, he awakened suddenly as if from a trance and hurried to the forest to recover his altar. But the altar was no more there; it had transformed into a peepal tree. Pururava got that tree felled and brought it to his capital where the carpenters made Arani (a wooden implement used in ancient India to produce fire) from its wood. Since then Pururava conducted regular Yagyas with the help of that Arani and attained to the Gandharvaloka where he was never separated from Urvashi again.

3.4.7 Birth of Jamadagni and Vishwamitra

Pururava had six sons- Aayu, Amavasu, Vishwavasu, Shrutaayu, Shataayu and Ayutayu. Amavasu had a son Bheema and Bheema in turn had a son Kanchan. Jahnu was the son of Kanchan’s son, Suhotra. At the time of Ganga’s descend on earth, when Jahnu saw his hermitage inundated, he drank all her water. He released the Ganges only when the Devrishis prayed him. Since then Ganges also came to be known as Jahnavi, the daughter of Jahnu.

Lineage of Jahnu grew as follows- Jahnu- Sumant- Ajak- Balaakashva and Kusha. Kusha had four sons- Kushaamb, Kushnaam- Adhurtraja and Vasu. Kushaamb observed severe penance with a desire to have a son like Indra. Pleased by his penance, Indra himself took birth as his son. He came to be known as Kaushik. Kaushik had a daughter named Satyavati who got married to Richeek. Sage Richeek prepared kheer in two parts- one for his wife Satyavati and another for Satyavati’s mother. Instructing Satyavati, he went to the forest.

When Satyavati and her mother were about to eat the kheer, her mother exchanged her part of kheer with that of her daughter saying that her son had to foster the world while the son of the sage had nothing to do with wealth and all that. Satyavati agreed to that and ate that part of kheer, which was reserved for her mother whereas her mother ate Satyavati’s part. When Richeek returned from the forest, he noticed formidable changes in the body of his wife. He understood that she had eaten her mother’s part of the kheer. Angrily the sage predicted that she would have a son who would be Kshatriya-like in virtues whereas her mother would have Brahmin-like son. Satyavati begged pardon and requested the sage to change his prediction saying that the crime was committed by mistake and that she would be happy to have a Kshatriya-like grandson but not a son. At her request the sage changed his prediction.

As per the prediction, Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni whereas her mother gave birth to Vishwamitra. After giving birth to Jamadagni turned into a river named Kaushiki.

In later course, as a partial incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Parashuram took birth as the son of sage Jamadagni.

3.4.8 Description of Kashyavansh

Pururava's son Aayu had been married to Rahu's daughter. They had five sons- Nahush, Kshatravriddh, Rambh, Vraji and Aneyna. Suhotra was the son of Kshatravriddh. He had three sons- Kaashya, Kaash and Gritsamad. Shaunak was the son of Gritsamad whereas Kaasheya was the son of Kaashya. Lineage of Kaasheya grew as- Kaasheya- Raashtra- Dirdhakapa and Dhanvantari. Dhanvantari's body was free from all the physical faults like ageing and diseases.

Dhanvantari's lineage grew as- Dhanvantari- Ketumaan- Bheemrath- Dibodas and Pratardan. Pratardan was also known as Shatrujit because of his conquering his enemies. Since he had acquired a horse named Kulavay hence he also came to be known as Kulvayaashva. Pratardan had a son named Alarka who enjoyed his rule on earth for sixty-six thousand years.

Lineage of Alarka continued as follows- Sannati- Sunith- Suketu- Dharmaketu- Satyaketu- Vibhu- Suvibhu- Sukumar- Dhristhaketu- Vitihotra- Bhaarga and Bhaargbhumi. It was progeny of Bhaargbhumi who gave rise to four classes of people.

3.4.9 Description of King Raji and his Sons

King Raji had five hundred prowessive sons. Once at the beginning of battle between the demons and the gods, they appeared before Brahma and enquired as to which part would win. Brahma said that only that part would win which would be aided by King Raji. First the demons approached Raji and requested him to fight from their side. King Raji stipulated that he would fight only when the demons agreed to appoint him as their Indra. The demons told him that Prahlad was their Indra and returned. Then the gods also approached King Raji and requested him to take their side. Raji put the same condition before them also to which the gods agreed.

In a fierce battle and aided by King Raji, the gods defeated the demons. After their victory, Indra bowed before King Raji and expressed his desire to present him with the kingdom of heaven. Thus King Raji became Indra. After the demise of Raji, Narad instigated his sons to acquire the rule of heaven. All the five hundred sons of Raji approached Indra and requested him to give them the rule of heaven but Indra refused plainly. At that Raji's sons dethroned Indra forcibly and themselves became Indra. After much time had passed, Indra approached

Brihaspati and prayed him to help him regain the rule of heaven. Brihaspati assured him that he would soon establish him at the throne.

Afterwards Brihaspati created illusions in the minds of Raji's sons. He also conducted many Yagyas to increase the radiance of Indra. Guided by the illusions, Raji's sons began to behave in anti-religious ways. Then Indra easily killed them all and regained his designation.

3.4.10 Tale of Yayati

Nahush had six sons- Yati, Yayati, Sanyati, Aayati, Viyati and Kriti. Yayati had two wives, Devyani, the daughter of Shukracharya and Sharmishtha, the daughter of Vrishparva. Devyani gave birth to Yadu and Turvasu whereas Sharmishtha gave birth to Druhayu, Anu and Puru. Because of a curse of Shukracharya old age had descended on Yayati prematurely.

Yayati then requested his eldest son Yadu to exchange his youth with his old age but Yadu refused. Then Yayati requested each of his sons one by one but all of them refused plainly for the fear of getting old prematurely.

At last Yayati's youngest son Puru gladly accepted his request and gave him his youth. Regaining the youth, Yayati once again indulged in carnal pleasures with both his queens. But everyday his desire for pleasures increased like a fire flared up by ghee. After one thousand years Yayati realised his mistake and decided to expiate for his sin. Thus, Yayati returned Puru his youth and acquired his old age once again. Then crowning Puru as the king, he took an exile to the forest.

3.4.11 Description of Yaduvansh and the Tale of SahastrArjuna

Yayati's eldest son Yadu had four sons- Sahastrajit, Kroshtu, Nala and Nahush. Sahastrajit had a son Shatajit who had three sons Haihaya, Hehaya and Venuhaya. Lineage of Haihaya grew as- Dharma- Dharmanetra- Kunti- Sahajit- Mahishmaan- Bhadrashrenya- Durdabh and Dhanak. Dhanak had four sons- Kritveerya, Kritaagni, Kritdharma and Kritauja.

Kritveerya had a prowessive son Arjun. Arjun had worshipped Dattatreya and by his blessings acquired one thousand arms. Since then he came to be known as Sahastrarjun. Dattatreya had blessed him with many other boons like rule of entire earth, fostering of his subjects in religious ways and killing by some human being famous in all the three worlds. At that time, there was no other king equal to Sahastrarjun in virtues. He ruled the entire earth for eighty-five thousand years.

Once Sahastrarjun was enjoying his past time on the waters of Narmada when he happened to have an encounter with Ravan, the king of Lanka. Sahastrarjun captured Ravan easily and imprisoned him at an isolated place in his kingdom. With time ego of Sahastrarjun had crossed all limits. He began to terrorise the sages and other religious people. When his atrocities increased beyond

tolerance level, Lord Vishnu took a partial incarnation as Parashuram, the son of sage Jamadagni and Renuka. As per the prediction of sage Richeek, Parashuram grew with Kshatriya - like virtues. He had in fact taken incarnation to relieve the earth from the atrocities of egoist kings. Parashuram had received arms training from none other than Lord Shiva. He was very obedient to his father and had beheaded his own mother by the Parashu (axe) that he had received from Lord Shiva at the dictate of his father. In due course Parashuram not only got Ravan released from captivity but also killed Sahastrarjun.

Sahastrarjun had one hundred sons among whom Shur, Shursena, Vrishasena, Madhu and Jayadhwaj were prominent. Jayadhwaj had a son Taaljunga. Taaljunga had one hundred sons among whom Vitihotra and Bharat were prominent. Bharat again had one hundred sons whereas Madhu also had hundred sons among whom Vrishni was prominent. After the name of their forefather Yadu, this clan came to be known as Yaduvansha.

3.4.12 Description of Kroshtuvansh

Lineage of Kroshtu grew as follows- Kroshtu- Dhwajnivan- Swati- Rushanku- Chitrarath- Rashibindu. Rashibindu had one lakh queens and ten lakh sons among whom Prithusharva, Prithukarma, Prithukirti, Prithuyasha, Prithujay and Prithushan were prominent. In their lineage later on occurred a king named Jyamadh. He was so dedicated to his wife Shaivya that despite being childless, he did not dare to marry other women because of her fear.

Once, Jyamadh took part in a fierce battle in which he defeated all his enemies. While he was about to return, he heard pitiable cries of a woman. He saw a beautiful young lady who was crying for her protection. Jyamadh was so infatuated by her beauty that he took her to his kingdom. When they reached at the gate of the palace, the king saw that the queen Shaivya was waiting for him along with a big crowd. When Shaivya saw a beautiful young lady sitting beside the king on the chariot, she began to shout at him. The horrified king tried to explain that the young lady was his daughter-in-law. The queen shouted even louder that when they did not have a son, whence the daughter-in-law came. But the king explained that he had selected a wife for her would-be son.

As the effect of their conversation queen Shaivya soon conceived and gave birth to a son inspite of her advancing age. They named the son as Vidarbh. In due course of time, Vidarbh got married to that lady whom his father had brought home earlier. They had three sons- Krath, Kaushik and Romapad. Romapad had received preaching from Narad.

Lineage of Krath grew as follows- Krath- Kunti- Ghrishti- Nighriti- Dashaard- Vyoma- Jimoot- Vikriti- Bheemrath- Navrath- Dasharath- Shakuni- Karambhi- Devraat- Devakshatra- Madhu- Kumarvansh- Anu- Kurumitra- Anshu- Satvak. Satvak was the forefather of a clan that was named after him.

3.5 Chapter 5 (Part 5)

This chapter contains 6 sections.

3.5.1 Puruvansh

The lineage of Puru grew as Puru- Janmejaya- Prachinvaan- Praveer- Manasyu- Abhayad- Sudayu- Bahugat- Sanyati- Ahamyaati- Raudraashva. Raudraashva had ten sons among whom Riteshu was the most prominent. Riteshu had three sons among whom Apratirath was most prominent. Lineage of Apratirath is as follows- Apratirath- Aileen- Dushyant and Bharat. King Dushyant had fallen in love with Shakuntala, the daughter of sage Vishwamitra and elf Menaka.

They got married secretly in the forest and after a few days, King Dushyant returned to his kingdom promising Shakuntala that he would call her as soon as he reached his palace. He had given Shakuntala his ring as a memento. But while Shakuntala was crossing the river on her way to the palace, the ring slipped from her finger and was swallowed by a fish. In the absence of the ring, King Dushyant refused to identify Shakuntala. So, she returned to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra and gave birth to a child who later on became famous as Bharat.

Bharat had been very prowessive since his childhood. His first meeting with King Dushyant was also very dramatical. It is said that once King Dushyant was hunting in the forest and he saw a boy who was counting the teeth of a lion. Impressed by the bravery of the boy, the king enquired about his parentage and reached the hermitage where sage Vishwamitra narrated him the whole story. Meanwhile a fisherman had also recovered the ring from the fish and handed it to the king who had thus recalled the whole story. In the hermitage, King Dushyant came to see Shakuntala and he candidly accepted her and his son Bharat.

Bharat had three queens and nine children. Since none of the children resembled him in features, he expressed his doubts about their paternity. Fearing the wrath of Bharat, his queens killed all the children. Then with a desire to have a son, Bharat organised a Marutsoma Yagya. As a result he got Bharadwaj as his son. Bharadwaj’s second name was Vitath. His lineage grew as follows- Vitath- Manyu.

Manyu had many sons like Brihatkshatra, Mahaveer, Nara, Garg etc. Their lineage grew as follows Nara- Sanskriti- Gurupreeti and Rantidev. Garg had a son Shini who became famous as Gaargya and Shainya also. Mahaveer lineage is as follows- Durukshay- Trayyaruni- Pushkarinya and Kapi. In the lineage of Brihatkshatra occurred a king Hasti who founded the city of Hastinapur. Hasti had three sons- Ajmirh- Dwijmirh and Purumirh. Among the sons of Ajmirh were included Panchals and a daughter Ahilya. Ahilya was married to sage Gautam. They had a son Shatanand. Satyaghriti was the son of Shatanand. Once Satyaghriti happened to sight the extremely amorous and beautiful elf Urvashi.

Her mere sight was enough to cause the ejaculation of his semen, which fell on a reed and divided into two parts. From these two parts were born a boy Krip and a girl Kripi. King Shantanu discovered Krip and Kripi in the forest and brought them to his palace. In later course, Kripi was married to Dronacharya, the teacher of Kauravas and Pandavas. Ashwatthama was the son of Dronacharya. One of the king named Kuru in the lineage of Ajmirh established the sacred region of Kurukshetra.

3.5.2 Description of Kuruvansh

In the lineage of Kuru, there occurred a King Prateep. He had three sons- Devapi, Shantanu and Vaahlik. Devapi had taken an abode in the forest in his childhood. Hence Shantanu came to become a king after their father Prateep.

Once in the kingdom of King Shantanu, there was no rainfall for twelve years at length. Perplexed by the continuous drought-like situation, Shantanu consulted learned Brahmins. Brahmins informed him that he had no genuine right on the kingdom, which in fact belonged to his brother Devapi. They also told him that as long as Devapi was not fallen from his supreme position, the drought would continue. Alternatively, handing over the kingdom to Devapi might also result in the end of the drought.

Then Shantanu's minister Ashmasari appointed certain Brahmins who always spoke in anti-Vedas ways. Their continuous preaching disinclined Devapi's mind from Vedas. On the other hand one day, King Shantanu proceeded towards the forest along with Brahmins and his courtiers to hand over the kingdom to Devapi. There the Brahmins tried to convince Devapi to accept the onus of the kingdom. They were sighting anecdotes from the Vedas to corroborate their argument. But Devapi criticised Vedas and spoke in anti-religious ways. At that Brahmins instructed the king to return to the kingdom, as there was no use to convince Devapi. They also assured Shantanu that since Devapi had been disinclined from Vedas, he had lost his right to the kingdom and the famine would also come to an end.

Shantanu's younger brother Vaahlik had a son Somadutta. Bhuri, Bhurishrava and Shalya were the sons of Somadutta. In later course Shantanu got married to Ganga and had a son Bheeshma. From his second wife Satyavati, Shantanu had two sons- Chitrangad and Vichitraveerya. Chitrangad was killed by a Gandharva whereas younger Vichitraveerya was married to the princesses of Kashi, Ambika and Ambalika. He was so busy in carnal pleasures with his two wives that soon he contracted tuberculosis and died because of it. Despite their indulgence in carnal pleasures, Ambika and Ambalika could not bear a child from Vichitraveerya. Hence in order to continue their lineage, Satyavati inspired Ambika and Ambalika to appear naked before Vedavyasa and beget a child. Since Ambika closed her eyes while she appeared naked before Vedavyasa, she begot a blind son, Dhritarashtra. Similarly, Ambalika grew pale when she appeared naked before Vedavyasa. Hence she begot a son Pandu who was congenitally afflicted with jaundice. Not satisfied by the outcome, Satyavati

once again persuaded Ambika and Ambalika to appear naked before Vedavyasa. But the queens sent a maidservant Vinita before Vedavyasa. Vinita appeared naked before Vedavyasa without any fear or shyness. Hence she begot an extremely wise son Vidur.

In later course Dhritarashtra got married to Gandhaari, the princess of Kandahar whereas Pandu received two wives Kunti, the daughter of Shoorsen and Madri, the princess of Madra. Dhritarashtra had one hundred sons and a daughter Dushala. Duryodhan was the eldest among the one hundred sons of Dhritarashtra. Pandu on the other hand had five sons among whom Yudhishthir was the eldest.

All the five sons of Pandu were born with the help of five gods- Dharma, Vaayu, Indra and Ashwini kumars because Pandu was carrying a curse that he would die if he ever tried to copulate. Pandu's five sons- Yudhishthir, Bheema, Arjun, Nakul and Sahadev came to be known as Pandavas. Five Pandavas were married to Draupadi, the daughter of Panchal King Drupad. From Draupadi each of the Pandavas had a son. Their names were Prativindya from Yudhishthir, Shrutsen from Bheema, Shrutkirti from Arjun, Shrutaneek from Nakul and Shrutkarma from Sahadev. Besides them Yudhishthir had a son Devak from Yaudheyi. From Hidimba, Bheema had a son Ghatotkachch and from Kashi a son Sarvak. From Vijaya, Sahadev had a son Suhotra whereas from Renumati, Nakul had a son Nirmitra. Arjun was the most prowessive among the Pandavas. Apart from Draupadi he had three more wives- Ulupi who belonged to the Nagas, Chitrangada, the princess of Manipur and Subhadra, the sister of Lord Krishna. From these three wives Arjun had three sons-Iravaan from Ulupi, Vabhruvaahan from Chitrangada and Abhimanyu from Subhadra. In the battle of Mahabharat all these sons of the Pandavas fought valiantly and sacrificed their lives. It was Abhimanyu's son Parikshit who continued the lineage of Pandavas and ruled the earth till right now.

3.5.3 Incarnation of Lord Krshna

Vasudev, the son of Shoorsen was married to Devaki, the daughter of Devak. On that occasion of their marriage, Devaki's cousin Kansa was driving their chariot. At that time, a celestial voice declared that the eighth son of Devaki would kill Kansa. Kansa in the excitement was ready to kill Devaki ten and there but Vasudev convinced him saying that he would himself hand over all his children to him. Thus assured by Vasudev, Kansa dropped the idea of killing Devaki.

When the marriage of Vasudev and Devaki was taking place, Prithvi approached Brahma in the guise of a cow. She complained to Brahma that population of mean-minded people was increasing and that she was not more able to bear the burden of their anti-religious deeds. Prithvi said- "O Lord! The same demon Kaalnemi whom Lord Vishnu had killed in his previous birth has taken incarnation of Kansa, the son of Ugrasena. Many other fearsome demons Arishth, Dhenuk, Keshi, Pralamb, Sunda, Banasura and many more have taken over the rule and tormenting the religious people in many ways. They keep

million strong forces. I am unable to bear their burden. So kindly do something to get me rid of this burden."

Hearing the words of Prithvi, Brahma said to the gods- "Prithvi speaks the truth. Indeed she is carrying too much burden. Let us all go to the shore of Ksheersagar and pray Lord Vishnu and intimate Him about all this matter." Then accompanied by the gods, Brahma arrived at the coast of Ksheersagar and prayed Lord Vishnu. Pleased by their prayer, Lord Vishnu appeared before them in His universal form and said- "Brahmaji! Believe my words and be assured that whatever you and these gods desire shall realise." Thus assured by the Lord all the gods and Brahma prayed once again. Pleased by their prayer, Lord Vishnu plucked a black and a white hair from his head and said-"Both these hair of mine shall take incarnation on earth and remove the miseries that the people face there. All of you take partial incarnation on earth to attenuate the strength of the demons. This black hair of mine shall take birth as the eighth son of Devaki and kill Kansa who is an re-incarnation of Kaalnemi."

While this conversation was on, Devarshi Narad appeared before Kansa and informed him that Lord Vishnu would take birth as the eighth son of Devaki. Hearing the words of Narad, Kansa angrily put Vasudev and Devaki behind the bars. There in his abode, Lord Vishnu instructed Mahamaaya (personified illusion) to implant the six foetuses who were in Pataal in the womb of Devaki, one by one. He knew that all of them would be killed by Kansa. Then he instructing Mahamaaya to implant his part Shesha who would appear as the seventh issue of Devaki, in the womb of Rohini, the second wife of Vasudev so that he could appear as her son instead of Devaki’s. Lord instructed Mahamaaya to appear in the womb of Yashoda in Gokul while He Himself would appear as the eighth issue of Devaki. He also told Mahamaaya that He would take birth on the eighth day of the darker phase in the month of Bhaadrapad while she would take birth on the ninth day and that immediately after His birth, Vasudev would himself carry Him to Gokul and leaving me beside Yashoda, he would carry her back to Mathura.

3.5.4 Appearance of Lord in Devaki’s Womb

As per the dictate of Lord Vishnu, Yogamaaya implanted six foetuses in the womb of Devaki. All the six children were killed by Kansa immediately after their birth. Yogamaaya transplanted the seventh issue of Devaki into the womb of Rohini who was residing at that time in Gokul. Then Lord Himself appeared as the eighth issue of Devaki. Since the time of His arrival, radiance of Devaki increased manifold. At the same time, Yogamaaya also appeared as an issue of Yashoda in Gokul. Seeing the arrival of Lord Himself as the eighth issue of Devaki, the gods prayed Him with devotion.

Then on the eighth day in the darker phase of Bhaadrapad, Lord took birth. At the time of His birth, the wind suspended its motion. The reverse attained extremely purified state whereas dense clouds gathered in the sky and caused drizzling. Seeing the child born with auspicious Swastik mark on his chest,

Vasudev recognised Him and prayed Him. At the same time, he and Devaki also feared that Kansa would kill their eighth son also. So, they prayed the Lord to hide His divine appearance. Lord assured them that their ordeals would end soon.

Then Vasudev put the child in a winnower and started his journey on foot to Gokul carrying the winnower on his head. Because of the influence of Yogamaaya, all the guards fell asleep while the gates of the prison opened automatically. It was raining heavily at that time. So when Vasudev reached in the open, Sheshnag spread its hood over him to shade the Lord from rain. In Gokul, Nand's wife Yashoda too gave birth to a girl child but because of Yogamaaya's influence she did not know anything about the birth. Vasudev arrived there and putting Lord beside the sleeping Yashoda, he took her baby and returned to his prison in Mathura.

As soon as the baby reached in the prison, she began to cry loudly. Her cries awakened the guards who ran to inform Kansa about the child's birth. Kansa at once arrived there and snatching the baby from Devaki's lap, he dashed her on the wall. But before he could throw the baby, she slipped from his grip and taking eight armed Jagdamba's appearance, established in the air. Laughing loudly then, mother Jagdamba said- "O Kansa! You cannot kill me. Your killer has taken birth. Lord Hari had been your death in your previous births. In this birth also He will kill you. So from now on, make efforts for your benefit only. Saying this Jagdamba vanished. Worried by the words of Yogamaaya, Kansa called a meeting of his prominent demons and said -"These evil gods have hatched a conspiracy to kill me. But being a brave man, I do not take these gods into account. You have yourself witnessed how Indra fled before the shower of my arrows. You would also remember how the clouds rained heavily in my kingdom when Indra had forbidden them from raining on a kingdom and I had pierced them with my arrows.

All the things on earth except my father-in-law Jarasandh bow before me in fear. I don't care for the gods. Even their efforts to kill me make me laugh. But still I must not take the word of Jagdamba lightly that my killer had taken birth. We should therefore kill all the children who have taken birth within the past few days." Instructing the demons Kansa approached Vasudev and Devaki in the prison and released them apologising his cruel action in the way of killing their innocent children.

3.5.5 Killing of Putana and Salvation of other Demons

When Vasudev was released from the prison, Nand visited Mathura on some official trip. He also came to see Vasudev. Vasudev greeted him for the birth of a son and instructed him to return to Gokul as soon as possible. He also requested Nand to look after the son of Rohini as his own son. After meeting Vasudev when Nand was returning, many kinds of thoughts were disturbing him. In the Gokul while Nand was away, an ogress Putana had stolen the little Krishna in the night and was breast-feeding him with her poisoned milk. But

little Krishna sucked even her life through her breast. Making a loud noise and assuming a huge body, Putana fell on earth and died. Only then the village folk came to know about the incident. They also saw little Krishna sitting in the lap of Putana.

The frightened Yashoda swept little Krishna with the tail of a cow to do away with all the bad omens. The other cowherds also prayed Lord Vishnu to protect the child from all calamities.

KILLING OF SHAKA

When Lord Krishna was twenty-seven days old, a festival was organised in Gokul. Mata Yashoda bathed the baby while the Brahmins recited hymns. Yashoda saw that baby was feeling sleepy, so putting him in a cradle, she left it under a cart. The cart was loaded with pitchers of milk, curd and butter. After sometime, lord Krishna awoke and began to cry for a feed. But amidst festivities, Yashoda could not hear his cries.

Meanwhile a demon Shakatasur rode the cart wishing to press the cart and thereby kill the Lord. But before he could act, the Lord touched the cart with His feet and lo and behold! The cart turned over and all the utensils kept on it came crashing down. Even the demon was crushed to death under the cart. Other boys, who were playing nearby, informed the Gopis (ladiesfolk) that the little Kanhaiya had turned over the loaded cart, but they did not believe the kids. Yashoda ran in horror and lifted the baby in her lap. The Brahmins recited pacifying hymns then. Thereafter the baby was bathed again with sanctified water. A feast of Brahmins followed then. Ultimately they were seen off with many gifts.

SALVATION OF TRINAVART

Once Mata Yashoda was playing with the baby lord in her home. All of a sudden she felt as if the baby was getting disproportionately heavy. Soon, she felt herself unable to bear the child anymore. So she left the child on the ground and began to pray Purushottam Lord Rama. Soon afterwards she forgot about the event, but all was not over yet. Trinavart, a demon minister of Kansa, had arrived in Gokul as a fierce cyclone. He covered entire Gokul with dust and blinded the people temporarily. For a moment people could not see anything and during that moment Trinavart blew the baby in air with him. When the dust settled, Yashoda did not find the baby Krishna where she had left him. She felt extremely sorry and fell on ground in depression. Other womenfolk also gathered round her. They too began to cry not seeing baby Krishna there.

In the form of cyclone, the demon Trinavart had blown baby Krishna with him; but he too could not bear his heavy burden. So he began to lose his velocity. Lord Krishna caught him by neck. The demon died in a few moments and his

dead body fell in Vraj. And Yashoda got a new lease of life when she saw baby Krishna safe and sound. Nand and other Gopas too were overjoyed.

NAMING OF LORD KRISHNA

Once, the supreme ascetic Gargacharya arrived in Gokul. He was the ancestral teacher of Yaduvanshis. Nand joyfully welcomed and treated the hermit. Then he requested him to carry out the ritual of naming and suggest suitable named for both of his sons. Acharya Garg said, "O Nand, everyone knows that I am the ancestral teacher of the Yadavas. If I carry out the naming ritual for these boys, people will understand that they are Devaki's sons." So Nand requested Gargacharya to name his sons secretly. Gargacharya accepted his request and carried out the naming rituals secretly in Nand's cattle shed.

Garg said: "This son of Rohini will cause by his virtue, great pleasures for his near and dear ones. So his second name will be Rama. And because of excessive strength, people will call him as Bala also. Since he will unite the people also, so one of his names would be Sankarshan."

Thereafter, Garg said pointing to Yashodanandan. He has taken incarnation in every age. In the past ages, he had taken white, red and yellow complexions respectively. This time he has taken dark complexion, so he will be known as Krishna. Once he has been the son of Vasudev, so people will call him as Vasudev also. He will cause salvation of all of you, and great joy for the fellow Gopas and cows. With his help, you will overcome even the severe crises. O Nand, This boy will be equal to Narayana in virtues, wealth, beauty, fame and influence. Foster this child with care and earnestness." Thus naming the boys as per their virtues, Garg returned to his hermitage.

CHILDHOOD OF LORD KRISHNA

The time passed in Gokul as usual. Balrama and Krishna too grew normally. Soon they began to walk on knees and palms. With their childish plays they both amused men and women folk of Gokul. Everyone took special care of them and looked after them to save them from any possible danger. Ladiesfolk were especially careful about them.

Soon afterwards, both the kids began to walk trottingly. Now their movement no longer confined within the boundary of their home. Because of his special virtues, Krishna began to lead other kids of his age group whereas his elder brother Balaram was somewhat serious in nature. Krishna specially enjoyed teasing the girls and milkmaids of Gokul. Often he would eat stealing their milk, curd and butter. At other times, He did not hesitate even to break their pitchers. In such situations the ladiesfolk used to gather in Nand's home to complain against Krishna. And every time Yashoda promised them to punish Krishna. But every time, when she proceeded to punish him, she forgot everything before his sweet, innocent smile.

One day, Balaram complained against Krishna, "Ma, the little Kanhaiya has eaten mud. Worried about Krishna's health, Yashoda scolded at him: "Tell me, O mischievous Krishna, why did you eat mud". At that moment, little Krishna's eyes were moving with fear. He made an excuse: "No Ma, I have not eaten any mud. They are telling you a lie. If you don't believe, me see yourself." Saying this, Krishna opened his little mouth. Yashoda peeped into his mouth and what she saw there amazed her. She could not believe it. The entire universe was visible in his little mouth. Yashoda saw strange places, entire Vraj and even herself in the little mouth of Krishna. She felt dizzy. With his illusionary powers, Lord wiped out the memory of this incidence from the mind of Yashoda, and she again immersed in love with her child.

UKHAL BANDHAN AND SALVATION OF YAMALARJUN

Once, wishing to feed Krishna with butter, Yashoda began to churn milk in the morning. Very soon, Krishna too awakened and not finding the mother on her bed, He set out to search her. Soon He found her in the courtyard where she was churning the milk. He began to insist for breast feeding at once. So Yashoda stopped churning and began to breast feed Krishna. Affection played on her face. Suddenly the milk kept on the fire pot began to boil. Yashoda left Krishna in order to attend the boiling milk. But the unstiated Krishna filled with anger and broke the pitcher of curd. Then he went inside and began to eat butter, when Yashoda came back; she understood the matter and began to search him with a stick in her hand. After eating butter himself, Krishna was now feeding the monkeys with it. Seeing the mother come in hot pursuit, Krishna jumped over the mortar and ran away. Yashoda chased him, but soon felt tired because of her bulky body.

Thereafter, Yashoda proceeded to tie Krishna as a punishment. She got a rope and tried to tie Krishna. But the rope fell short by two fingers. She joined many ropes together but the result was same. Every time the ropes fell short by two fingers. Soon, Yashoda was bathing in sweat. When Krishna saw his mother in depression, he himself tied in the ropes. Tethering little Krishna to a heavy mortar, Yashoda engaged in usual household tasks. Tethered to the mortar, Krishna glanced at the two Arjun trees, which were standing on the gate like two sentries. He resolved to salve them.

Maitreya asked Parashar about the trees. Parashar said: "The lord of wealth Kuber had two sons Nalkubar and Manigreev. One day they were enjoying the sweet company of pretty women on the bank of Mandakini River. Just by coincidence, Devarshi Narad arrived there. Out of Shyness, the women folk at once covered themselves, but both the sons of Kuber stood boldly without feeling any shame. Indignant Narad cursed them to become trees and stay in that form for one hundred years. Narad showed kindness as well that despite being in tree forms, they would have the memory of God alive and would be salved by Lord Shri Krishna. Thus, to keep the words of his supreme devotee

Narad, Lord dragged the mortar to the two Arjun trees. He walked in such a way that the mortar got stuck between the trees. Krishna then pulled the mortar and in no time the trees were uprooted. Two divine men appeared from the uprooted trees and bowed at the feet of Krishna and prayed him with pure hearts. Then they departed to their heavenly abode.

MIGRATION TO VRINDAVANA

The uprooted Arjun trees fell with thundering sound. All the people shivered with fear and felt as if lightning had struck somewhere. All the elders including Nand met together and discussed the matter. Unanimously they concluded that, of late disturbance had increased in Gokul and the circumstances were no longer conducive to raise the kids like Balaram and Krishna there. So they unanimously decided to leave Gokul and migrate to a verdant place named Vrindavana. In their opinion, Vrindavana had ample vegetation and fertility to support them and their cattle.

Thus, on an auspicious day, the entire population of Gokul set out for Vrindavana. They packed their households on bullock carts and drove their cattle in herds and started in convoy. In Vrindavana they built their houses and started their life once again.

Parashar says: "The verdant environment of Vrindavana, Govardhan mountain and crystal clear waters and sandy banks of Yamuna river together filled the hearts of Balaram and Krishna with joy. Along with the fellow cowherds, they began diverse kinds of plays there.

SALVATION OF VATSASUR

One day, Balaram and Krishna were grazing their cattle on the bank of Yamuna River. A demon, meanwhile, took the guise of a calf and mixed with the herd. Obviously, he had malicious intentions. Lord Krishna had already seen the demon taking calf's guise and mixing up with the herd. He signalled Balaram and they together reached near the calf. The calf appeared particularly healthy, so Krishna and Balaram mockingly saw it with admiring eyes. Suddenly they held the calf with its hind legs and tail twirling it in air they threw it in the sky. When the demon died, they threw him on a Kath (wood-apple) tree.

SALVATION OF BAKASUR

One day, all the cowherds took their cattle to a large pond to let them drink water. There they say a huge creature sitting like a hillock on the bank. They were frightened by its appearance. The creature was in fact a demon named Bakasur who had arrived there in the guise of a storke. He was himself very strong and had a long pointed bill. As soon as the cowherds drew near him, The storke hastily picked up Krishna and swallowed him. Other cowherds including

Balaram were stupefied. They could not believe their eyes. But inside the beak, Lord Krishna made him extremely hot and caused severe burning in demon's throat. So the demon could not swallow Krishna and regurgitated him, and began to hit him with his strong beak. But Lord held his beak with both his hands and tore the demon's mouth apart. And as son as the demon died, a ripple of joy surged among the cowherds.

SALVATION OF AGHASUR

One day, Krishna planned a picnic near Nandanvan. So rising early in the morning, He awakened his fellow cowherds sounding a horn. Together, all the cowherds, and their cattle went to the forest. There, on the bank of Yamuna River they began to play joyfully. Nandanvan was in fact an abode of the demon Aghasur. Kansa had sent him there. Seeing the boys playing, he felt extremely jealous. Knowing that Krishna had killed his brother Bakasur and sister Pootana, it seemed an ideal moment for the demon to avenge the death of his siblings. Thinking thus, the demon took guise of python and lay in the way and opening his mouth like an opening of a cave. The cowherds too fell in his trap. Thus driven by curiosity, all the cowherds entered the demon mouth one by one. When Lord Krishna saw that his friends had entered demon's mouth. He too entered it to protect them.

Aghasur wanted to masticate the cowherds including lord Krishna; but the lord increased his body and choked demon throat. Now the breath of demon stopped. His eyes rolled over and at last his life left his body through Brahmrandhra (cosmic pore). With his ambrosial eye, Lord resurrected these dead fellows and their cattle and together they came out of the demon's mouth. As soon as the demon died, a divine flame emerged from the python's mouth. It waited there sometime for God. And when lord Krishna came out, the flame mingled with him.

ATTACHMENT OF BRAHMA, STEALING OF CATTLE AND COWHERDS

Parashar says: The cowherds told the tale of Aghasur's salvation to their parents only after a year of the incidence. During that period of one year, Lord Krishna multiplied himself and took the guise of his fellow cowherd and their stock of cattle to remove the illusion of Brahma, who was the cause of the following incidence.

After Aghasur's life mingled with God, Lord Krishna came with His fellow cowherd on the bank of Yamuna. They left their cattle to graze freely and they sat together to take their lunch. All of the cowherds tasted one-another's food, as they wanted to feed Krishna with the tasty food. Meanwhile surprised by Aghasur's salvation, Brahma too had arrived there and saw Krishna eating food defiled by the cowherds. With that sight, Brahma grew suspicious if Krishna was indeed an incarnation of lord. Thus driven by the illusion and to test the authenticity of lord's incarnation, Brahma kidnapped all the cattle first and

when Krishna went out to search the cattle Brahma kidnapped and concealed the cowherds also. Soon lord Krishna understood the craftiness of Brahma, so he multiplied himself into his fellow cowherds and cattle. Replicas resembled truly to the cowherds in appearance, complexion, nature, activities, voice, sticks and even in costumes. The replicas remain in existence for complete one year.

Back there, when Brahma returned after hiding the cowherds and the cattle, he was stunned to see the cowherds and cattle as usual. Brahma was feeling dizzy when lord bestowed his grace on him. Brahma saw Narayana in every dust particle. Brahma therefore bowed his head at the feet of lord and said: "O lord, I submit before you. You can be won only with devotion and not by ego. No one can know your omnipresent appearance. Thus praying and worshipping lord Narayana, Brahma returned to his abode. The cowherds remained separated from God for one year. But they felt as if only half a second had passed because of the illusionary influence of God. That is why they related the incidence of Aghasur’s killing to their parents only after a year it took place.

SALVATION OF DHENUKASUR

When Krishna and Balaram entered sixth year of their ages, they got the permission to take the cattle out for grazing. Along with their fellow cowherds the two brothers too began to take their cattle to Vrindavana. Thus they sanctified the earth of Vrindavana with their pious feet. Seeing the beauty of Vrindavana, with beautiful, colourful flowers and sweet fruits, Lord Krishna felt overjoyed. He then used to graze his cattle at the foothills of Govardhan and on the banks of Yamuna River. Playing flute was his favourite pass time. One day Krishna's beloved friend Sudama said: "Kanhaiya, there is a beautiful forest name Talvana. It has uncountable numbers of trees laden with ripe fruits. But a formidable demon Dhenukasur guards that forest. He is very strong. So no one goes there; even animals and birds shun that place. But we are tempted to eat those sweet delicious fruits. If you and Daau (Balaram) wish, we may go there and eat those delicious fruits."

Thus hearing this, Krishna and Balaram guided all of them to Talvana. There they shook the trees and in no time a heap of ripe, delicious fruits gathered under the trees. All the cowherds began to eat fruits. While eating, they were also making lot of noises. Disturbed by the sound of fruits falling and noise of the cowherds, the demon Dhenukasur arrived there as a donkey. He was braying loudly and tried to hit Balaram, but Balrama caught him by his hind legs and threw him in the air. The demon died in an instance. Since that day, everyone visited Talvana fearlessly and the cattle grazed there freely.

GRACE ON KALIY THE NAGA

One day, Bala-Krishna arrived on the banks of Yamuna with their friends. Balaram was not with them that day. The water of the river Yamuna was intoxicated by the poison of Kaliy- the Naga. It was exceptionally hot that day

and all the cowherds and cattle were very thirsty. So without giving any thought, they all drank the water from Yamuna and died. But Lord Krishna resurrected them by his ambrosial sight.

Then Lord Krishna decided to purify the waters of Yamuna. Thus tying a cloth round his waist, Krishna climbed a Cadamba tree and jumped into the river. In the water the lord started playing and splashing water. Soon the waves began to rise high. When Kaliy- the Naga heard the noise. He got extremely angry and appeared before Krishna.

He saw a beautiful, tender, dark complexioned boy playing joyfully in the waters. He stung him and tied him in his spirals. Tied in the spirals of Kaliy, lord became absolutely motionless. Seeing Krishna in death like situation, all the cowherds and even the cows felt very sorry. Just then lord freed himself from the hold of Kaliy. Then a game of hide and seek began between them. Lord dodged the Naga for a long time. Thereafter he rode on Kaliy's hood and began to dance there.

The followers of God, like Gandharvas etc. began to play Mridang, Dhol etc. to give him a company. Tired from the blows of lord's feet, Kaliy soon began to vomit blood. Naga's wives began to pray God, "O lord, your incarnation is to punish the evil ones for their sins. You have shown your grace on us also. We are fortunate to have a sight and touch of your feet. Pity O lord. This Naga can no longer bear your momentum. He will die. We are all your slaves. Kaliy is our lord. Kindly forgive him." With kindness, lord released Kaliy, who prayed thus: O lord in your creation we snakes represent Tamoguna (dark virtues). We are confused by your illusions." Lord dictated Kaliy to migrate with his family to Ramanakdweep. Since then water of Yamuna became pure for humans and animals.

DRINKING OF DAVANAL (FOREST FIRE)

After defeating Kaliy, Lord Krishna and all other people of Vraj felt extremely tired. They were very hungry and thirsty also. So they did not go back to Vrindavana, but stayed on the bank of Yamuna in the night. Because of intense heat of summer, surrounding forests had been shrivelled. At midnight those shrivelled forests caught fire and the sleeping people were engulfed by it. They awakened startled and took shelter at Krishna. Seeing their horrified appearance, Lord Krishna drank the infernal forest fire and thus saved the lives of innocent people who had rested their lives at him with faith.

SALVATION OF PRALAMBASUR

One day, Balaram and Krishna were playfully grazing their cattle along with other cowherds in the forests. When a demon Pralamb arrived there with an intention of kidnapping Krishna and Balaram. The demon had come in the guise of a cowherd, but the God easily recognised him. They accepted his proposal of

friendship, but were thinking about the way for his salvation. God thereafter summoned all his friends and said: "Pals, today we shall divide ourselves in to two teams and play joyfully. Thus the teams were divided and each team chose Krishna and Balaram as its captain respectively. It was stipulated that the members of defeated team would carry the members of winner team on their back up to the place pointed by them. Thus the game began and soon both the teams reached a secluded place.

At one time, the team headed by Balaram won. So the members of Krishna's team were to carry them on their back. Demon Pralambasur offered Balaram a ride on his back. Balaram agreed to ride on the demon's back; but as soon as he rode on the demon's back, the demon galloped. But he could not go far for not being able to bear Balaram's weight. Them the demon regained his huge formidable size and tried to escape by flying. First Balaram felt terrorised but soon he realised his real powers and hit on the demon's head with a powerful fist. The blow shattered demon's head and he fell on earth dead like a huge mountain.

Parashar says: "Most of the time of Lord Krishna's boyhood passed in Vrindavana. There He grazed cattle and played flute. His flute had a divine, enchanting sound. The Gopis used to gather around Him drawn by the enchanting tunes."

They also heard the enchanting Venugeet that fills one hearts with the memory of Bhagwat. One of the girls said to her friend: "O dear friend, having the privilege of seeing Lords beauty and receiving His kindness is the real salvation. Another girl said: "O friend, what penance this flute had observed that it has got a closer contact with lips of Nandnandan (an epithet for Krishna). Even the siblings of this flute, trees and other vegetation's are pleased with its fortune and are hence showering their leaves and flowers on him." One more said: "O friend, look, even Bhagwati Lakshmi has left her luxurious abode in Vaikunth and arrived in Vrindavana to have a look of lord Devakinandan." A Gopi expressed her jealousy: "Even this doe is better than us, O friends, look how engrossed is she looking at God that her eyes are not blinking."

Hearing the sweet enchanting tunes of flute even the heavenly elves gather in the sky over Vrindavana. They also see the beauty of lord Krishna and showered the flowers of their braids on him. Even the cows forgot grazing when then heard the enchanting music of flute. The calves too forgot drinking milk and began to look at lord Krishna with joy. This is the real devotion for lord Krishna. You have to forget yourself in order to find him. Condition of girls of Vrindavana was exactly the same. After having the sight of lord Krishna they remembered nothing; not even the way back to home. They stood in the forests in a trance, completely tired, unaware of their self.

A girl said pointing to the fauna: "Look O friends, look at these birds. Do you know that these birds were the saints and sages in their previous births. In this

birth also they are sitting in a state of trance. Look they have forgotten their knowledge hearing the sweet enchanting music of the flute. And look at Yamuna. She is also unable to contain her exhilaration. She is eagerly splashing her waves to wash Lord's feet. Yet another girl said: "Look friends the clouds cannot see their lord scorching in the sun. So they have covered the sun and shaded Lord Krishna. Now they are drizzling as if showering petals." A girl said: "Friends, look, these Bheelanis are better than us. They have such a strong urge of Krishna's sight that when Govind returns home, they smear their body with dusts of his feet. Blessed is this mountain which has dedicated its entire self in the feet of Brajnandan and feels overjoyed. It is his supreme devotee. Kanhaiya has infused even non-living things with life by his sweet tunes of flute.

STEALING OF CLOTHES

The unmarried girls of Vrindavana felt as if their lives were dedicated to Lord Krishna. Each of them wished heartily to have lord Krishna as her husband. So in order to get their desire fulfilled, all of the spinster girls of Vraj began to take bath in Yamuna early in morning of Hemant season and worshipped goddess Katyayani. When MadanMohan learned that the unmarried girls wished to marry him. He went to see them at dawn. The girls were bathing naked in the river; their clothes were kept on the bank. Lord Krishna stealthy took those clothes and climbed on a Cadamba tree. Lord had not stolen their clothes with malicious intentions. He had stolen them to remove their flaws and make them realise their real appearance that they were not mere girls, but pure souls. Without realisation of the real self, one can not experience the God.

The girls were, in fact, the hymns of Vedas, Sadhana, Siddhis, Sages and Brahmvidyas (Vedas) themselves that took the guise of girls to enjoy the vicinity of God. God removed their clothes that symbolised lust. Because of the lords grace they all were able to enjoy God's company.

Parashar says: "O Maitreya, Thus Lord Krishna removed the shyness of the girls of Vraj through His sweet talks. He derided at them, made them dance like puppets and even stole their clothes when they were bathing naked, but they did not deter his actions. Instead they felt overjoyed by the close presence of their beloved Kanha."

LIFTING OF GOVARDHAN

Parashar says: One day, Balaram and Krishna saw that many delicious kind of sweetmeats were being cooked at home. With curiosity and politeness, they asked Nand and other elders: "Father, which festival are you preparing for? Which god will be worshipped? What purpose will such worship serve? Nand Baba explained: "Sons Devraj Indra is the god of clouds. It is because of Indra's grace that we get rain. So these materials are being prepared to worship Indra.

Krishna said: Father every creature in the world enjoys comforts or suffers as per his fate. None of the gods can change the results. Action is primary in the world. One gets the results as per his actions. Even Indra is God as a result of his action. Anyone, who performs one hundred Ashvamegh Yagyas, becomes Indra. But even after performing crores of Ashvamegh Yagyas one can not stay in Vraj. It is the duty of Indra to cause rain. So it will rain even if you don't worship Indra. But to feed the poors and satisfy them with clothes and other gifts is real worship. By their blessing, we shall be happier. I desire that with all these materials we should worship Giriraj Govardhan and distribute the Prasad among the poors. With which their souls will be sated and will have the grace of God.

Thus Lord Krishna told his father that all the people should worship unitedly and unitedly they should receive Prasad. If you are ready to do as per my desire, its all right, otherwise I will not worship your haughty god, nor receive his Prasad.

WORSHIP OF GOVARDHAN AND INDIGNATION OF INDRA

Thus convinced by Kanhaiya's wise reasoning, all the Gopas agreed to him. Nand Baba said, "O Krishna, we are making all these preparation for you only and we will do as you say. We will worship Govardhan. For us Govardhan is also like a god. It gives us grass, water, and fuel etc., which are necessary for our lives. Thus with lord's consent, they dropped their plan to worship Indra and resolved to worship Govardhan faithfully.

On the Purnima (full moon) day in the month of Kartik (November) all the Gopas (people of Vraj region) gathered near mount Govardhan. During the night all of them circumambulated the mountain. Lord invoked the Ganges by his wish and bathed Govardhan with her water. Then they put vermilion on it, offered basil-leaves, flowers etc and worshipped it. Brahmins recited hymns in its praise. To make the people believe in their rituals, Lord Krishna himself appeared on the mountain in huge form and exclaimed: "I am Giriraj (the king of the mountain) and began to eat the offerings. But as a child, He was still among the villagers who faithfully bowed before the mountain. Among them, the child Krishna said: "look, what a surprise Giriraj has appeared himself and bestowed his grace on us. He has accepted our worship." There after all the Gopas distributed Prasad among themselves and felt supremely satisfied.

When Indra learned that the Gopas had stopped worshipping him, he grew outrageous. In anger, he ordered the clouds to rain torrentially over Vraj and cause heavy flood in Vraj region. In no time dense clouds gathered over Vraj. Soon there was lightning, thunder, darkness and storm all around. Then it began to rain torrentially. All the people took refuge at Lord Krishna and prayed him to save them from the anger of Indra. Lord Krishna said: "Those who regard me as their, are mine and I am theirs, So there is no need to worry for you."

Saying this, Lord lifted Giriraj on his little finger and called all the people of Vraj along with their cattle under the lee of Govardhan. Then he ordered his wheel

Sudarshan to absorb the water of the clouds so that not even a single drop could fall on earth. Thus for seven days continuously Lord balanced Govardhan on the little finger. Thus Lord Krishna also came to be known as Giridhari. People who had gathered around him, just kept on seeing Lords moon-like face and hence did not feel thirsty or hungry. In fact the comforts those people got during those seven days are beyond verbal description. Lord held Govardhan on one hand, and conch in the other, while with the remaining two hands He began to play this flute. Hearing the tunes of his flute, all the people of Vraj began to dance with joy. After the rains stopped, all of them returned to their homes.

CEREMONIAL BATH OF SHRI KRISHNA

When Indra learned about the happenings in Vraj, he soon realised his mistake. Indra himself reached Vraj and begged lord for His pardon. Then he gave lord a ceremonial bath with the milk of Surabhi. For protecting the cows, the Lord also got one more name "Govind".

RASS LEELA

Parashar related to Maitreya the tale of Kamadev's humiliation. The purpose of describing this tale is just that common people should reflect on the selfless love of Gopis for Lord Krishna and experience the love of God for them as well.

After conquering Brahma and other gods, ego of Kamadev had surged to great heights. He, therefore, requested God to quench his thirst for war. God invited Kamadev to visit Vrindavana on the night of Sharad Purnima (Full moon night) in the season that precedes winter, and told him that on that divine night He would enjoy the company of crores of Gopis. "If I have slightest passion for any of them, you will win, otherwise you will lose."

That night Lord Krishna added more divinity, more brilliance to it with a resolution of Raas with the help of Yogmaya (personified illusion). It was a perfect night for the purpose - flowers bloomed in Vrindavana, full moon shone, and gentle, cool breeze blew from the banks of river Yamuna. Amidst this stimulating ambience Lord Krishna began to play an enchanting tune on his flute. The tune attracted Gopis, their passion surged to its zenith and under the influence of love for lord Krishna and as if in trance, all of them ran to meet their beloved Kanhaiya leaving all their fear, bondage, patience and shyness behind. Some of them were intercepted by their husbands and dragged back to home. But only their physical bodies stayed put, their souls reached Vrindavana.

In Vrindavana on the bank of Yamuna, Gopis saw Vrindavana Vihari (epithet for Krishna) near their familiar Cadamba tree. Yogmaya adorned all the Gopis from tip to toe. In fact those Gopis were not ordinary women.

Maitreya asks: "Gopis had not regarded Krishna as ParaBrahma. What was the basis for their passion then?"

Parashar says: When a wretched person like Shishupal, who always abused lord Krishna could find supreme position, there should be no doubt for Gopis who had such a profound passion for Lord." So Gopis arrived and gathered around Lord Krishna.

To test their devotion and to enhance the honour of Kamadev, Krishna said to them: "O Gopis, the pure ones, it is not fit for you to stay here at this hour of night. Go and serve your husbands. Your duties must be first to your husband's children and cows. They will be waiting for you eagerly. Go and console them. You can gain me by hearing, reciting, seeing etc. You need not sit here. Go to your homes."

Gopis, however said: "Govind, we have come to you leaving all the mundane lusts behind. Now going back is like ruining our lives. It is the greatest misfortune if someone returns to mundane affairs even after being at your feet." These words that reflected divine feelings of Gopis pleased Lord. He began to enjoy their company. But a feeling of ego began to creep in the minds of Gopis because of lord's closeness. They began to assume themselves as highly fortunate. To remove their ego, Lord disappeared right among them.

PITIABLE CONDITION OF GOPIS IN GOD'S ABSENCE

After the disappearance of God, Gopis were perplexed. Their hearts burned with desire. They had dedicated their entire selves in the feet of Lord. They were entirely merged in the love of Krishna. Thus driven by passion, Gopis began to search Lord Krishna. They asked trees, creepers and vegetation for the whereabouts of their beloved. They then spotted His footprints at one place. Footprints of Radha were also there. 'Indeed He would have carried her, that great fortunate one, on His shoulders.' They thought. Lord had indeed, after disappearing from amidst Gopis, taken Radha to an isolated place. She had then began to think herself superior to other Gopis. So at one place, she said: "O Lord, I can't walk now. My tender feet are tired. Kindly carry me on your shoulders to wherever you wish." At her request, Lord Krishna agreed to carry her on his shoulder. But as soon as she proceeded to ride, Lord disappeared from there also. Now, Radha began to cry and wail and fainted. At the same time, other Gopis also reached there and found Radha lying unconscious on the ground. All of them including Radha then returned to the bank of Yamuna and began to wait for Krishna's appearance.

RE-APPEARANCE OF LORD AMONG GOPIS

When the beloved Gopis burst into tears, Krishna's patience gave away. His heart melted at their condition and He appeared amidst them. A sweet smile played on his beautiful face. He wore a garland of fresh Vaijayanti flowers and yellow clothes. His beauty could have moved even Kamadev. Seeing their beloved Kanha once again amidst them, Gopis got a new lease of life. All of

them began to embrace Lord and thus quench the fire of separation that was burning their bodies.

Thereafter, along with the beauties of Vraj, Lord came to the bank of Yamuna. Gopis put their queries before him for solution. Lord said: "O beloved Gopis, I do not reciprocate to the desire of my beloved ones for physical love. Because of it their conscience remains always engrossed in me. Hence, I take to hiding even after meeting so that you could feel complete imbibement in me.

MAHARAAS

From the words of the Lord, Gopis forgot the pains of separation. From the closeness of their beloved, their lives were successful now. With those Gopis, Lord Krishna started Maharaas on the pious banks of river Yamuna. All the gods gathered in sky to witness that divine festival. Gopis were even more fortunate than Lakshmi. But even amidst crores of Gopis, who were eager to devote their everything to Him, Lord completely refrained from desires, feelings and even actions. Thus Lord defeated even Kamadev and removed his ego.

SALVATION OF SUDARSHAN AND SHANKHCUR

Parashar says: Once on the occasion of Shivaratri, Nand Baba and all other Gopas drove their carts with families and reached Ambikavana on a pilgrimage tour. There they took bath in the river Saraswati and with devotion worshiped lord Shiva and Parvati. They also observed day long fast and decided to pass their night on the bank of Saraswati. But a huge python inhabited that place. During the night the python emerged and caught hold of Nand's leg. Nandbaba cried loudly. All the Gopas gathered around him. He cried again: "Kanhaiya, This snake is all set to strangulate me. Save me."

Lord touched the python with his feet and instantaneously the python vanished. In its place appeared a divine-looking human being. He said: "O Lord, I was a Vidyadhar named Sudarshan. I was so much obsessed with my beauty, youth, luxury and comforts that I used to insult others. One day I had derided at the ugly appearance of the sage Angira. So indignantly he cursed me to become a python. But, pleased by my realisation of mistake, he had told that when God himself would touch me, I would regain my original appearance." Thereafter, Sudarshan went round the God, worshiped Him and with his permission, departed to his abode.

On another occasion, Lord arrived in Vrindavana during Vasant Ritu (spring Season). There He took part in Vasantik Raas (Raas of spring season) with the Gopis. During Raas itself, a demon Shankhchur tried to escape away kidnapping some of the Gopis. A stampede resulted among Gopis. Hearing their noise, Lord ran after the demon, carrying a huge Sal (Shorea) tree in his hands. In no time He overtook the demon and killed him by just one blow. He picked up the gem from demon's head and handed it to Balaram.

SALVATION OF ARISHTASUR

Once, Kansa sent a demon Arishtasur to Vrindavana. The demon arrived there in a bull's guise. That huge bull came to Vrindavana and began to terrorise the people with his loud sound. Seeing the bull, Balaram said to Krishna: "Kanhaiya, I have never seen such a huge bull before." All the people began to cry for help. Lord consoled them and challenged the bull demon: “O fool, why are you terrorising these cows and cowherds? I am going to shatter your ego." The challenge from God pinched the demon. Tapping his hooves angrily, the demon attacked God. He wished to gore Him, but God held his horns and pushed him back. Then kicking the demon God killed him in no time.

KANSA SENDS AKRUR

After the killing of Arishtasur, Devarshi Narad visited Kansa and asked: "O Kansa, the girl who had slipped form your hand was in fact the daughter of Yashoda. Krishna and Balaram, who are staying in Vrindavana, are infact the sons of Devaki and Rohini respectively. Because of your fear, Vasudev has kept them under the supervision of his friend Nand. Those two boys have killed the demons sent by you." Hearing these words, Kansa shook with anger and put Vasudev and Devaki in prison again. Thereafter he called his minister Akrur and asked him to set out at once for Gokul. He said to Akrur: "Akrurji, you are an old friend and well-wisher of mine, Go to Gokul and bring the sons of Vasudev, who are staying at Nand's home. Invite them to visit Mathura, to witness the festivities of Dhanush-Yagya." Akrur understood Kansa's intentions, but feared that if he refused, that demon would kill him. So he decided to visit Gokul, and also have the opportunity of seeing God. He was feeling overwhelmed by the mere thought of it. Next day, he set out on a grand chariot to meet his supreme Lord in Gokul.

Meditating in the feet of Lord, Akrur was heading towards Vrindavana. He was feeling himself as the most fortunate one for he was sure to have a sight of Lord. Thus obsessed with many kinds of devotional feelings, Akrur alighted from the chariot at the border of Vrindavana and started walking. He found it unjust to ride a chariot on the land of Vrindavana where lord Krishna treaded. By the time, he reached Vrindavana, Lord Krishna and Balaram had returned home after grazing their cattle. Seeing them, Akrur fell at their feet. Both the brothers raised Akrur and addressed him as "Chacha" (uncle), and escorted him into the house.

Akrur was given a warm welcome and treatment there. After the dinner, they assembled in Nand's drawing room. Nand inquired about the reason of his sudden arrival. Akrur said: "Kansa is organising a wrestling competition in Mathura. He has invited all the big and small kings to the competitions. He has invited you with Krishna and Balaram as well. Beautiful Mathura is worth seeing. Gullible Nand felt pleased by Akrur's talking and said: "King Kansa has

shown a great honour to me. He has sent invitation only to other kings, but has sent his minister to call me and a golden chariot for my kids." So it was announced in Gokul that all the people would go to Mathura the next day and witness the festivities there.

DEPARTURE OF KRISHNA-BALARAM FOR MATHURA

When the Gopis heard about Krishna leaving Gokul to visit Mathura, they began to wail and cry. They were getting so much restless by the news that, they felt, their lives would end before the sunrise. They started imprecating fate that it had no kindness. First it provided them with a closer contact with their beloved Kanha, now it was causing a long separation from him. Some of Gopis even begged for death, they felt it better than living without Kanha. All the Gopis kept on crying and wailing nightlong. Mother Yashoda awoke early in the morning next day. She churned out butter and adding Mishri (sugar candies), she took it to Krishna to feed him. But there she found that both Krishna and Balaram were getting ready to set out for Mathura. They held mother's feet and said: "Pardon us, O mother, we are going to Mathura." These words disturbed Yashoda. She ran and fell at Akrur's feet and said: "I am your slave.

O Akrur, please do not take my beloved sons to Mathura. They are inseparable from my heart. Why Kansa has summoned them to Mathura?

O Akrur, go and tell him to take everything from us, but spare our sons. We are also ready to live in jail, but can't lose our beloved sons." Akrur consoled Yashoda. "Bhabhi (sister-in-law), don't worry. These two brothers are going to Mathura to witness the festivities there and will return soon to comfort your heart." Yashoda said: "Akrurji, Mathura is a town of gold and both of my sons are too young yet to be needed there for any reason."

Touching the feet of Nand and Yashoda, both the brothers said: "Father, mother, we will definitely return. Presently we wish to see the grandeur of Mathura." Meanwhile all the Gopis and Gopas had gathered there. Crying and wailing, the Gopis said: "You are very Cruel, O Akrur, who named you as Akrur. You have come here to lacerate our hearts." Second Gopi said: "No friend, it is not a fault of Akrur. Our complaints are with Shyamsundar. We left everything, our husbands, children, our homes and dedicated our entire selves in your service. And now you are deserting us so ruthlessly. We have no support for our life except you, O Madhusadan." Saying this, all the Gopis burst into tears again.

All the Gopas, including Shridama surrounded the chariot and said: "O Krishna we had not even dreamt that you would desert us so ruthlessly. O Kanhaiya we have seen with our eyes that even Indra, Varun, Sanakadi and Brahma bow before you. But we have never regarded you as God. We regarded you as our friend. Are you angry with us? O my childhood friend Kanhaiya, we request you, we will never abuse you in future. If you were intending to go, why did you, then

save us from the infernal forest fire. Why did you save from the deluging rains? We cannot live without you. Tell us O benevolent friend, When will you return."

Lord Krishna consoled them all and took many of them with Him. The chariot began to move. As long as the flag of the chariot remained visible, people kept on crying and wailing. Even the eyes of Akrur filled with tears. Lord asked him: "Kaka, why are you weeping?" Akrur replied: "O Lord, Kansa is the great sinner. I feel he will try to torment you by all means. So, my heart says, that I should take you back to Vrindavana, because if Kansa did any harm to you, their spirits will curse me for ever."

AKRUR HAS A SIGHT OF LORD IN FOUR-ARMED FORM

Hearing Akrur's words, Lord understood that when he had arrived in Vraj, he was afflicted with a feeling of majesty. But now, it has been replaced by affection now. He therefore decided to remove his dilemma. Thus, Lord said to him: "Kaka, Mathura is still some distance away. So you take a bath in Yamuna. We brothers are waiting for you in the chariot."

As soon as Akrur took a dip in Yamuna, Lord showed him a sight of His abode Vaikunth and his Narayana's appearance in which, he was holding conch, wheel, mace and lotus in each of his four hands and was lying on the bed of Sheshnaga. With folded hands, Akrur prayed to lord: "O lord, you are the reason for the existence of Brahma and the Universe. O Lord, I pray at your feet again and again. Now I recognise you. You are the one who took the incarnations of Matsya, Kachchap, Varah, Narsinh, Vamana, Rama etc. Thus after bath and worship, Akrur returned to the chariot. Lord Krishna understood that now a devotional feeling had arisen in the mind of Akrur for Narayana. Lord asked: "Your condition seems miserable. Did you see anything extra-ordinary under water?" Akrur said: "O Lord, now bestow your grace on me. Kindly come to my home and accept my hospitality."

ARRIVAL IN MATHURA

After the departure of Akrur, Nandbaba too set out for Mathura along with the Gopas. On the way itself, they caught up with Krishna and Balaram. All of them then reached Mathura together. There they stayed in a garden. After sometime, with Nand's permission, both the brothers set out to see the city of Mathura. Mathura was indeed a beautiful town. All the residents of Mathura thronged on roads, roofs and attices to have a sight of Krishna and Balaram.

GRACE ON KUBJA

On the way, they met a pretty but hunched woman. She introduced herself as Kubja, the maid of Kansa. Her duty was to smear the members of the royal family with sandalwood paste. God asked her if she would smear him with sandal paste. Kubja said: "O Manmohan, I see no one more fitting than you for

the sandal paste." Thus she smeared Lord's forehead with saffron. On Dau's forehead she smeared musk containing sandal paste, other Gopas smeared all the remaining sandal paste on their heads. Lord then, put His feet on Kubja's and holding her chin gave her head a slight jerk. And in no time, Kubja's hunch was gone and she turned into a pretty woman. She begged lord for His love. The Lord promised her a meeting in future, and proceeded ahead.

BREAKING OF THE BOW

After salving Kubja, Lord Krishna and other Gopas moved ahead. At a place they saw a huge bow kept on a high stage. Many strong men were guarding it. Lord entered the canopy and easily lifted the bow and broke it into pieces. There was a big applause from all around. Dau said: "Krishna, now the crowd will increase here, so let us escape in time. Thus, both the brothers and their friends beat a retreat to their camp. There they rested for night. There in Mathura, breaking of the bow had frightened Kansa. He could not sleep during the night. Even in his dreams, he saw nothing, but Krishna everywhere around him.

KILLING OF ELEPHANT

Early in the morning, Kansa summoned his minister and ordered him to make Kuvalayapeed, the elephant to stand in the centre of the main gate. He thought that the elephant would kill both the boys if they dared to enter the fort through main gate. Back there in the garden, Krishna and Balarama set out in wrestlers guise for the fort. At the gate, seein an elephant blocking the passage, they asked mahout loudly: "O Mahout, why have you made the elephant stand in the centre of the gate. Move it either ahead or back." But instead of moving the elephant out of the passage, the mahout steered it right on them. But before elephant could attack them, Balarama caught its trunk, while Krishna caught its tail. Both the brothers then dragged the elephant out of the gate and lofted it in the air. The elephant fell on the ground with a loud thud and died on the spot.

SALVATION OF WRESTLERS

Kansa felt very nervous by the news of elephant's killing. Before he could take stock of the situation, Lord Krishna and Balaram arrived in the amphi- theatre. The spectators present in the amphitheatre saw Lord as per their feelings. The menfolk saw Lord as a Jewel among the men. Womenfolk saw him as an incarnation of Kamadev. Cowherds saw their natural friend in Lord, while to Kansa He appeared as his death. But to his mother and father, Devaki and Vasudev and to Nand, Krishna and Balarama appeared as small kids. Sages and ascetics saw nothing but metaphysical coming in boys' guise. Learned ones sighted His cosmic form while to Yadavas He appeared as their tutelary God.

As soon as the Lord and Balaram arrived in the ring, the wrestlers, who were already present there, stood up like springs. A wrestler Chanur dragged Krishna and one named Mushtik dragged Balarama into the ring. They said to them:

"Both of you and we are the subjects of the great king Kansa. It is our duty to please our king with our art and skill. More over we will receive many rewards also."

Krishna said: "O wrestlers, you please fight among yourselves. We are boys yet, so we shall witness your fight from a distance." Chanur said: "No you are neither boy nor teenagers. You are stronger than the strongest. You have just killed an elephant which was stronger than thousand elephants." Thus, both the brothers were compelled to wrestle with the royal wrestlers. Balaram beat Mushtik on the ground so hard that he died at once on the spot. Krishna similarly killed second wrestler Chanur. All the remaining wrestlers met similar fate one by one. The massive crowd present there applauded them joyfully.

SALVATION OF KANSA

Seeing the shameful defeat of his wrestlers, Kansa infuriated with anger and proclaimed: "Tie all the opponents; tie Ugrasen, Devaki, Vasudev and Nand in ropes and bring them before me." Lord Krishna could not tolerate this and in a single jump, He reached on the stage where Kansa was present. Lord Krishna caught him by hair and said: "O Kansa, once you have caught a helpless woman by hair, I have avenged that insult. Now you will receive the fruits for your atrocities." Saying this, Lord began to twirl Kansa catching him by hair, and threw him down from the stage. Then Lord jumped once again and landed on the chest of Kansa. Kansa died instantaneously. Thus, Kansa who was an incarnation of the demon Kaalnemi received salvation. Lord Krishna then, released his parents from the prison and crowned his maternal grand father Ugrasen as the king of Mathura.

YAGYOPAVIT OF KRISHNA-BALARAMA

After the successful completion of all the royal ceremonies, the consecration of Krishna and Balaram was carried out. Thereafter, they came to stay at the hermitage of sage Sandipani for formal education. Extraordinarily brilliant Krishna successfully learned all the knowledge in short period of time. Then, as Gurudakshina (paying respect to the teacher) Krishna brought back his dead sons from the abode of Yamaraaj. Taking convocation bath, thereafter, Lord Krishna returned to Mathura. There, though living among royal luxuries and grandeur Lord Krishna remained indifferent. Memory of his sentimental, beloved devotees friend and other people of Vraj kept on pricking him.

SENDING UDDHAV AS MESSANGER

Savant Uddhav, the son of Yadava's minister Brihaspati was an intimate friend of Lord Krishna. Only he had the permission to enter Lord's sanctum. Seeing his friend Krishna in remorse, Uddhav asked: "Mathuranath, you seem to be upset. What is troubling you?" Lord Krishna replied: "Uddhav, I feel perplexed. I remember my days in Vrindavana. Please go to Vrindavana and get the news

regarding Gopis there. Also give them my message." Thus Lord Krishna donned Uddhav in his attire and sent him to Vraj in his chariot.

There he stayed at Nand's home. At night, Uddhav enquired about Nand and Yashoda's well being and about Vraj in general. That whole might passed in chatting.

BHRAMAR GEET

Next day, when the Gopis got the news of Uddhav's arrival, they thronged in and around Nand's residence. They recognised the chariot parked in front of the gate. It was the same chariot on which Krishna and Balaram had departed for Mathura. First they thought that their beloved Krishna had returned.

But someone informed that it was Uddhav, Krishna's Savant friend, who had come to preach them about metaphysical knowledge. Soon afterwards, Uddhav came out and spoke out loud: "O Gopis, listen to the preaching of Uddhav." But instead of listening to him, Gopis covered their ears. Feeling insulted, Uddhav expressed his dissatisfaction over their behaviour. Gopis said to him: “O gentleman, firstly we are not familiar with you, secondly we have no capacity to hear your preaching. Yes if you wish to give us a message of our most beloved; thousand of ears are eager to hear that." Uddhav then introduced himself as the intimate friend of Lord Krishna.

Knowing his identity Gopis welcome and treated Uddhav warmly. Uddhav then began to say again: "O Gopis, the person, whom you are declaring as your beloved friend, in fact recognises no mother, no father and no other relation. He has no form, no colour and no body. He is above all, non-existing all pervasive and the giver of joy. He is never separate from his devotee and beloved ones. All of you, too, feel the presence of that Supreme Being and be happy forever." Gopis said: "Uddhav, as long as Ghanashyam stayed with us, we saw endless virtues in him. But only within six months of his stay in Mathura, you wiped out all of his virtues and turned him virtueless.

Tell us with which mouth did he eat butter, with which hand did he break our pitchers, with which feet did he pasture cows in the forests and with which feet did he dance on the hood of Kaliy. Was he another Krishna?"

Harsh reaction of the Gopis startled Uddhav. He began to think where he had been caught. His knowledge of Vedanta was proving ineffective on the Gopis who were sunk in so much love. On the other hand, Gopis too were feeling embarrassed for treating the guest bitterly. But they were also not prepared to listen to such preaching that condemned love. Moreover, they had let out their long accumulating feeling.

Meanwhile a bumblebee perched at Radha's feet mistaking them for lotus. Pointing to it, all the Gopis said: "Beware O bumblebee, beware if you dare to

touch the feet of our Radha. It appears that you are a disciple of Krishna. There is now no secret regarding the virtues and actions of your friend. But it is good that he and you tied in friendship. You are black and your friend has a black heart. Virtues of both of you are same.

First He imbibed us in His love; then left us ruthlessly forever. He is not sorry for us. But why does Lakshmi serve in those feet? She must be careful, lest she should be deceived like us. O bumblebee you also appear to be a polymath who has come here to preach us. But you won't get an audience in Braj. You should better go to Mathura.

There is one Kubja go and relate your tale to her. You will receive ample donations from her. What will you get from the Gopis here? They have already lost their mental balance, because of separation from the beloved Krishna. If you have come to ask, why we loved Krishna. O bumblebee, we have no knowledge. But we know that our love for Krishna was not a mistake. Even the goddess Lakshmi does not leave His feet for a moment. Why should we leave his feet then? But O bumblebee, have you really come to convince us. When He could not come out of shame, He sent you to console us - the deaf and dumb Gopis, But be careful if you put your head at the feet of Radha.

Get away, we have already seen enough of flattery and flirtation of your friend. Deserting our affection for ephemeral things, we loved that eternal one. But He too abandoned us. Can you guess about our condition? Tell us, O Uddhav, shall we ever get the sight of Shri Krishna again?

Hearing the tragic tale of the Gopis, Uddhav too felt very sorry for them. He felt as if Mathuranath, lord Krishna was indeed neglecting those Gopis. Uddhav stayed in Vrindavana for six months. There he saw every place, every spot where lord Krishna had played once. When he was returning to Mathura, mother Yashoda presented him with butter, Radha gave him the flute. Thus immersed in the love and overwhelmed by its feelings, Uddhav reached Mathura. He said to Krishna: "Lord, the real appearance of love, that I saw in Vrindavana is the only truth." Shri Krishna said: "Uddhav, You are weeping. Just look at me." Uddhav looked at him with wide, opened eyes. In every single hair of Lord, there existed Gopis. Uddhav was indeed a Savant. But Lord had sent him to Braj only to be taught a lesson of love.

After the death of Kansa his widowed queens Asti and Prapti returned to their father Jarasandh's home and informed him that Krishna and Balaram had killed their husband Kansa. Infuriated by the news, Jarasandh at once launched a massive attack on Mathura. The people of Mathura were frightened by the strength of Jarasandh's army. Lord Krishna too fell in deep thought. Just then, divine weapons and chariots appeared from the heaven. Both the brothers took the weapons and boarded their chariots. Then they fought a fierce battle and slayed all the army of Jarasandh.

Balaram furiously caught Jarasandh and was about to kill him. But Lord Krishna stopped him. They then released Jarasandh and let him go unhurt. Jarasandh felt ashamed that Krishna released him because of his helpless condition.

Parashar says: Despite his shameful defeat, Jarasandh attacked Mathura seventeen times with huge armies. But every time, the Lord defeated him and released him in kindness. And every time Jarasandh felt more humiliated."

At last, instead of attacking Mathura himself, Jarasandh sent Kalyavan to defeat Shri Krishna. Kalyavan launched an attack on Mathura with one crore strong Malechchh army. This time Lord Krishna decided to vacate Mathura instead of countering the attack. He got Dwarkapuri constructed by Vishwakarma and settled all the people of Mathura there. Then, unarmed, Lord Krishna walked past Kalyavan. Pointed by Narad, Kalyavan at once recognised Krishna and gave Him a chase. He also challenged Him, but the Lord did not listen to his challenges and kept moving with face turned away. Kalyavan chased Him for long, but could not catch up.

Ultimately the Lord entered a cave. Kalyavan too followed Him into the cave. In the cave the Lord saw that someone was sleeping there. So He covered the man with his yellow length of cloth and himself hid inside the cave. Kalyavan too arrived there and saw the sleeping man. He mistook him for God and said: "Krishna, you might have thought that braves do not attack on sleeping people. So I will first wake you up and then kill you." Saying thus Kalyavan kicked the sleeping man hard. However, as soon as the man awakened and glanced at Kalyavan, Kalyavan got incinerated at once.

TALE OF MUCHKUND

Maitreya asked: "Gurudev, who was that sleeping man?"

Parashar says: "O king, that sleeping man was Muchkund, the son of the king Mandhaata. The gods had sought his assistance in their war against the demon during the Satayug. With Muchkund's help, the gods had defeated the demons and thus pleased had asked him to seek a boon. Muchkund then had sought a boon of seeing God in tangible form. The gods had assured him that he would have a sight of God in Dwapar Yuga. Since Dwapar Yuga was still far away, so Muchkund had asked: "What should I do till then?" The gods asked him to sleep somewhere and blessed him with a boon that whoever waked him up would be incinerated at once, by his glance. Thus, in order to get Kalyavan incinerated and show Muchkund with his Divine form, Lord had gone to that spot where Muchkund was sleeping.

Muchkund got the sight of God in Chaturbhuj form; and sought a boon of continuous devotion for three births. Thus, Lord defeated Malechchh army and captured all their wealth. He also defeated Jarasandh and caused great joy for the people of Dwarka.

MARRIAGE OF BALARAMA

The king of Anart, Raivat got his daughter Revati married to Balaram with the blessing of Brahma.

MESSAGE OF RUKMANI FOR LORD

Parashar says: "Bheeshmak was the king of Vidarbh. He had five sons and a daughter Rukmani. Rukmi, the eldest son of Bheeshmak, had fixed his sister's engagement with Shishupal, the prince of Chaidi. Narad did not like this development. He went to Kundanpur, the capital of Vidarbh and said in the court of Bheeshmak: O King, I am coming from Dwarka." Bheeshmak said! "O great Sage, I have never heard about any city named Dwarka". Thus, in the court of Bheeshmak, Narad narrated about the life of Lord Krishna and the grandeur of Dwarka. Bheeshmak heard the tale with full attention. His daughter Rukmani too enjoyed the tale.

But Rukmi had a strong opposition against lord Krishna. Ignoring the wish of his father, he was not ready to get his sister married to Lord Krishna. On the appointed day, Shishupal appeared there, in a procession, to get married with Rukmani.

But Rukmani was determined to marry Lord Krishna. She sent a love letter to Krishna through a loyal Brahmin and declared a fast unto death. Lord Krishna read her letter, which said: "O Trilokinath, since the moment, these ears have heard about your virtues, actions, character and plays, my soul experiences divine peace. O Achyut, my mind is dedicated in your feet. O great among the men, this Rukmani has dedicated herself in your feet. Now it is up to you to see that no jackal could take away the lion's share." The Brahmin, the carrier of the letter, returned to Kundanpur with an assurance from the Lord. Lord too called the charioteer and set out at once for Kundanpur. There in Kundanpur, Rukmani after getting the assurance from the Brahmin was thus waiting for Lord's arrival.

Preparations for Rukmani's marriage with Shishupal were on with full swing in Kundanpur. All the houses, streets and lanes were cleaned and sprinkled with scented water. All the men and women folk donned new clothes and ornaments. King Bheeshmak worshipped his ancestors and gods and welcomed the Brahmins liberally. Extremely beautiful princess Rukmani was given ceremonial bath and donned with auspicious clothes and bracelets.

The king of Chedi, Damaghosh got the auspicious rites for the marriage of his son Shishupal, performed by Brahmins. All the Baratis (people in marriage procession) were given grand reception. Many great kings like Shalv, Jarasandh, Dantvaktra, Vidurath and Paundrak were present in the marriage procession. They had come with their armies with an intention of fighting Krishna and Balaram. After Krishna's departure, Balaram too set out for Kundanpur with

chaturangini (with four wings) army, for he had known about their opponents' preparedness.

Rukmani was eagerly awaiting Lord's arrival. She had received the news that Dwarakanath (Krishna) had resolved to take her away. She was feeling overwhelmed in her heart.

Seeing Lord Krishna arrived intently in the marriage ceremonies of his daughter, king Bheeshmak welcomed him. Seeing him, even the common people of Vidarbh prayed "May our princess Rukmani get Shri Krishna as her husband. At the same time, Rukmani emerged from her palace to go to the temple of Ambikadevi, soldiers were guarding her. In the temple, Rukmani prayed peacefully: "O Mother Ambika I greet you and Ganapati, who is sitting in your lap. I seek your blessing that may my wish be fulfilled and may I receive Shri Krishna as my husband."

On her way back, Rukmani was walking very slowly for she was awaiting Lord's arrival, which was due in any moment. Just then, Lord Krishna appeared before her. Before she could ride her chariot Lord lifted her from amidst the crowd. And in the presence of hundreds of kings, Krishna and Balaram eloped away with Rukmani.

DEFEAT OF RUKMI AND SHISHUPAL

Hearing the news that Krishna has eloped with Rukmani, Rukmi and all other kings present there boiled with anger. Accompanied by their huge armies, they decided to give them a chase. Thus chased my them, Yadnvanishis stopped and encountered the kings boldly. With a true ambition to win, brave Yadav soldiers defeated the enemies. All the kings like Jarasandh fled for their lives. Rukmi had resolved that without getting Rukmani released from Krishna's captivity, he would not show his face in Kundanpur. He chased Lord Krishna for long. But Dwarakanath defeated him and got his head shaved.

MARRIAGE OF RUKMANI AND KRISHNA

Thus defeating all the kings, Lord Krishna brought Rukmani to Dwarka. There they got married formally. All the people of Dwarka celebrated festivities for many days. People presented them with lot of precious gifts. All the people were in great joy to see Lakshmi as Rukmani with her husband Lord Krishna.

BIRTH OF PRADYUMN, KILLING OF SHABARASUR

Kamadev was a part of lord himself. After getting incinerated by Rudra, Kamadev took refuge in the supreme lord to get an incarnation once more. Thus, Kamadev was born as Rukmani’s first son Pradyumn. But just after his birth, Pradyumn was kidnapped by a demon Shambarasur. The demon dropped the baby into the sea, where a huge fish swallowed him in whole. Coincidentally

the fish was caught by the fishers and presented to the kitchen of Shambarasur. When the cooks cut the fish open, an extremely beautiful baby emerged. Mayawati, the governess of the kitchen, felt overjoyed to see the baby. She began to rear the baby with love and affection.

Once Narad arrived in the kitchen and said: "Mayawati, do you know who is in your lap? " "No, O Devarshi, I found him from the belly of a fish," said Mayawati. Devarshi Narad said: "He is your husband Kamadev and you are his wife Rati. In this birth, he has appeared as Pradyumn the son of Krishna. Hearing this, Mayawati saluted Narad with respect. Since then she regarded Pradyumn as her husband and served him accordingly. When Pradyumn matured. Mayawati reminded him about his real appearance. Pradyumn, thereafter, killed Shambarasur and got married with Mayawati. Then the couple arrived in Dwarka.

TALE OF SYAMANTAK THE GEM

A person named Satrajit was a great devotee of Lord Suryanarayana. Pleased by his devotion, Suryadev presented him a gem called Syamantak. The gem had radiance equal to the Sun. Bearing that gem, Satrajit arrived in Lord's court. By the radiance of his gem, all the people and the courtiers mistook him for Suryadev and stood in his regard. But the Lord recognised him and asked his courtiers to be calm. Then to Satrajit, Lord Said: "Satrajit, your gem is really very beautiful. Nana (maternal grandfather) Ugrasen is the king of this region. If you present this gem to him, it will be very good. But Satrajit refused to present that gem.

One day, later on, Satrajit's brother Prasenjit went hunting, wearing the gem in his neck. In the forest a lion killed him and snatched the gem. The lion was in turn killed by the ursine king Jambvant. Jambvant took the gem to his cave and gave it to his children to play with. When Prasenjit did not return from hunting, Satrajit felt sorry and accused Krishna that He had killed his brother for the gem.

When lord Krishna heard that he was being blamed for the mishap, He himself went to the forests. There he found the dead body of Prasenjit, but there was no sign of gem around the cadaver. He found only footprints of a lion leaving from there. Following the footprints, He discovered the dead lion and the footprints of a great bear. Following the footprints, He reached in the cave where Jambvant's daughter Jambvati was playing with the gem.

As soon as lord Krishna proceeded to take the gem, Jambvant arrived. A fierce duel resulted between them. They continued to fight for twenty-six days without truce. On the twenty-seventh day Jambvant requested Lord! "Please wait O Lord." Lord said: "Do you want to take rest?" "No", said Jambvant, "I have recognised you. You are none other than Lord Narayana Himself. Nobody else has the power to defeat me." Lord appeared before Jambvant as Shri Rama.

Jambvant prayed and worshipped Him. He was feeling guilty that he dared to fight Lord. Lord said that He had arrived there for the gem only. Jambvant gave him the gem and also his daughter Jambvati. Lord returned the gem to Satrajit and married Jambvati formally.

MARRIAGE OF SATYABHAMA AND KRISHNA

Lord summoned Satrajit to His court and in the presence of the king Ugrasen, related the sequence of incidents that took place in the jungle. Satrajit felt ashamed. With a feeling of repentance he took the gem. He was getting afraid also that he made enemity with lord Krishna without reason. Hence to expiate his crime, Satrajit thought of presenting the gem Syamantak and his daughter Satyabhama to Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna accepted Satyabhama as his wife but returned the gem to Satrajit saying: "It is a gift of lord Suryadev. Keep it with you. You are required to deposit the gold that you get from it, in the royal treasure."

THEFT OF SYAMANTAK

Akrur and Kritvarma were not pleased with the marriage of Satyabhama. So they got Satrajit killed by Shatadhanva. Shatadhanva killed Satrajit in his sleep and absconded with the gem. Lord Krishna was then away in Hastinapur. Satyabhama too reached there and informed Krishna about her father's assassination. With Balaram, Lord Krishna chased Shatadhanva. But even after killing him, they could not trace the gem. Shatadhanva had given the gem to Akrur to keep till his return. But after the death of Shatadhanva, frightened Akrur came to stay in Kashi. From the effect of the gem Akrur performed many grand Yagyas there. Lord summoned Akrur from Kashi. After welcoming and treating him in the court, Lord asked him about the gem. Akrur showed the gem in the court. But Lord returned the gem to Akrur.

MARRIAGE OF LORD KRISHNA WITH KALINDI

Once Lord Krishna visited Indraprasth to see Pandavas. There riding a chariot with Arjuna, He came to the forests. On the bank of river Yamuna a pretty woman was observing penance. By the instinct of God, Arjun drew near her and asked for her identity. She said: "I am Kalindi, the daughter of Suryadev. I am penancing here in order to get married with Lord Krishna." Lord got Kalindi boarded on the chariot and got married to her formally.

LORD'S MARRIAGE WITH MITRVINDA

Mitrvinda was the sister of Vind Anuvind the king of Ujjain. She had a desire to get Lord as her husband. But her brother, Vind Anuvind was a follower of Duryodhan. So he stopped his sister Mitrvinda from getting married to Krishna. But Krishna eloped with Mitrvinda from the court and got married to her formally later on.

LORD'S MARRIAGE WITH SATYA

Satya was the daughter of Nagnjit, the king of Kaushal. She was extremely beautiful lady. The king had resolved that he would marry his daughter only to him who would defeat his seven most formidable oxen. Many princes has tried their luck since then but failed. When Lord Krishna heard about that, He reached Kaushal with his army. The king of Kaushal welcomed and treated him well, and told him about his resolution. Lord then took seven guises and in no time defeated his seven formidable oxen. Gladly the king married his daughter Satya to Lord Krishna.

LORD'S MARRIAGE WITH BHADRA

Parashar says: "Parikshit, Lord's aunt (father's sister) Shrutkirti was married in the kingdom of Kaikauja. Bhadra was the daughter of Shrutkirti. Bhadra's brothers like Santardan etc. themselves had got their sister married to Lord Krishna.

LORD'S MARRIAGE WITH LAKSHMANA

Lakshmana was the daughter of the king of Madra. She was very beautiful and meritorious. Lord abducted her all alone from the Swayamvara organised for her marriage. Later, Lord married to her formally. SALVATION OF BHAUMASUR

Pragjyotishpur was the capital of the demon Bhaumasur. He was very strong and powerful. He had snatched the canopy of Varun, earrings of Aditi the mother of the gods, and Maniparvat of the gods on Meru. Apart from these, he had also captured sixteen thousand and one hundred princesses as well.

Devraj Indra himself visited Dwarka and Prayed Lord to get them rid of Bhaumasur's atrocities. With the dear wife Satyabhama and riding his vehicle Garud. Lord Krishna arrived in the capital of Bhaumasur. But to enter Pragjyotishpur was an impossible task. But with the blows of his mace and arrows, Lord easily broke the hills, destroyed strategic positions and cut the snares with sword. By his wheel he destroyed the walls of fire, water and air. With the loud sound of conch, Lord rendered the machines, installed there, useless.

Ultimately, God destroyed the rampart of the citadel. Disturbed by the noise, the five-headed demon Mur ran with a trident to kill God. But with a single shot of his arrow, Lord broke his trident and cut his head with his wheel. Soldiers and commanders of Bhaumasur were also killed. Bhaumasur then came himself to fight. He had donned a shinning crown and was wearing big earrings. With his wheel, Lord cut the demon's head. As soon as He beheaded the demon, the gods showered flowers on the Lord and worshipped Him. Even the mother earth came and put a garland of five colours around lord’s neck. She also presented

to him the earrings of Aditi, canopy of Varun, and a great gem. At the request of earth, Lord assured Bhaumasur's son Bhagdatt freedom from his fears.

LORD'S MARRIAGE WITH CAPTIVE PRINCESSES

After slaying Bhaumasur, Lord entered his palace. There He released the sixteen thousand one hundred captive princesses. The princesses were very much impressed by the Lord. They had all accepted in their mind, Lord Krishna as their husband. Lord too bowed before their love and accepted them as his wives and arranged to send them to Dwarka.

PRADYUMN'S MARRIAGE WITH RUKMVATI

Rukmvati was the daughter of Rukmi, the brother of Rukmani. When a Swayamvara was organised for her, she saw Pradyumn. She was so impressed by him that she chose him as her husband. But it was not acceptable to other princes. They tried to stop their marriage. But defeating them all, Pradyumn abducted Rukmvati and married her formally. Then to please his sister Rukmani, Rukmi got his granddaughter Rochana married to Rukmani's grandsons Anirudh.

MARRIAGE OF USHA-ANIRUDH

The son of the demon king Bali, Baanasur was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Baanasur ruled over the kingdom Shonitpur. By the grace of Lord Shiva, he had received thousand arms. Even all the gods including Indra used to serve him. Thus blinded by his physical strength, Baanasur sought a boon from Lord to meet a match for his strength. Lord Shiva said: "O fool, your thirst for war shall be quenched when your flag is broken."

Baanasur had a daughter named Usha. Once she had a dream in which Anirudh was making love with her. She was very much perplexed by the dream. After a few days with the help of her friend Chitralekha, Anirudh sneaked into her palace. He stayed there and enjoyed the company of Usha for long. But Anirudh's clandestine stay could not remain hidden from the eyes of Banasura. So he put Anirudh in prison. There in Dwarka, everyone was worried by Anirudh's long absence.

It was Narad, who ultimately revealed the fact that Anirudh was in the prison of Baanasur. Hearing the news, Lord Krishna launched an attack on Baanasur. His armies surrounded Shonitpur. During Ghurabandi the flag of Baanasur's palace fell. Lord Shankar arrived to assist Baanasur. Lord Krishna cut all the arms of Baanasur. At the request of Shiva, he left only four of his arms intact. Baanasur bowed his head before Lord Krishna and brought Anirudh and Usha respectfully before Him. With them Lord Krishna returned to Dwarka where formal marriage of Usha and Anirudh took place.

TALE OF THE KING NRIG

Once, Lord Krishna's sons visited the forests. There they saw a huge Chameleon fallen in a large, deep well. They tried to pull it out but in vain. The princes, therefore, returned to the palace and related this strange episode to Lord Krishna. Lord too came to the well and with His left hand, easily pulled the Chameleon out.

As soon as the chameleon came out, it turned into a divine god and began to worship God. He said: "O Lord, I am Nrig. The king Ikshvaaku was my father. In my life, I had donated uncountable numbers of cows to the Brahmins. But once a cow, donated by me, returned to my cowshed. By mistake I made a resolution to donate it to another Brahmin. My action led to a dispute between the two Brahmins, and my wisdom failed to settle their dispute. Both the Brahmins went away unsatisfied, but I met this fate after death. Since then, I had been in this well in the form of a chameleon. Now, by the graceful touch of your hands, O Lord, I have received salvation." King Nrig then went around the Lord and returned to his heavenly abode."

SALVATION OF PAUNDRAK

Once Balaram and Krishna had gone to Braj to see Nandbaba there. Meanwhile the king Paundrak of Karush sent an envoy to lord Krishna with a message that said: 'I am Lord Vasudev.' Pandrak's envoy arrived in the court and read out the message: "To bestow my grace on the people, I have taken an incarnation. You have falsely named yourself as Vasudev and bore my insignia. Take my refuge or face the battle."

Hearing the message of Paundrak, Ugrasen and other courtiers began to laugh. Lord asked the envoy to inform Paundrak that He would launch His wheel on him and his army.

Receiving the message Paundrak launched an attack on Dwarka with two Akshauhini armies. The king of Kashi was a friend of Paundrak. He too came to his assistance with three Akshauhini armies. Paundrak had disguised as Vasudev and was bearing artificial conch, wheel, mace and lotus and. He had also adorned Swastika, Kaustubh etc. All the people began to laugh at Paundrak's clown like attire.

In no time, the Lord stripped him of all his adornments. His wheel cut his head. Then with an arrow the Lord cut the head of the king of Kashi. His head fell in front of his palace's gate. Sudakshin, the son of the Kashi king, organised a grand Yagya to avenge his father's killing. An ogress, Kritya emerged from the Yagya and began to burn Dwarka. All the people prayed Krishna to protect them. Lord assured them to be fearless and ordered His wheel Sudarshan to kill Kritya. Sudarshan extinguished the fire, killed Kritya and destroyed Kashi. Then it returned to the Lord's finger.

SALVATION OF DWIVID

There was once a monkey named Dwivid. He was the friend of Bhaumasur. When Dwivid heard about Bhaumasur's killing by Shri Krishna, he began to cause large-scale destruction in the kingdom. His disruptive activities in the country began to terrorise the subjects of Lord Krishna. Once hearing sweet music, the monkey was drawn towards the Raivtak Mountain. There he saw Balaram amidst beautiful young women. The monkey began to behave indecently. Angered by his indecency, Balaram hit him with his pestle, named Sunand, and killed the monkey.

MARRIAGE OF SAMB

Samb was the son of lord Krishna and born to Jambvati. He had Kidnapped Lakshmana, the daughter of Duryodhan from her Swayamvara. Infuriated Kauravas chased them and, with difficulty, they caught Samb and tied him. When the Yaduvanshis got the news, they began preparations to launch an attack on Kauravas. Balaram pacified them and reached Hastinapur alone. There he received a warm welcome from the Kauravas. Balaram said to them: "It is an order of the king Ugrasen that you should see Samb off with his newly wedded wife." Hearing Balaram's words Kauravas got angry and began to deride Yaduvanshis. Infuriated by Kauravas derision, Balaram trained his pestle and plough. He intended to turn over the town of Hastinapur into the river Yamuna. When the city began to shake, Kauravas felt perplexed and begged Balaram for his pardon. Balaram assured them to be fearless and returned to Dwarka with Samb and his newly wedded wife Lakshmana.

THE KINGS IN CAPTIVITY SEEK LORD'S HELP

Once Lord Krishna was holding His court when an emissary arrived in the court. The kings who were held captive forcibly by Jarasandh had sent him. The emissary related the miseries of those kings to Lord Krishna. Through the emissary, the kings had requested: "O Lord of the world, Kindly get us free from our miseries. We are in your refuge. We desire your sight. Kindly bestow us with your grace." Lord Krishna sent the emissary off with assurance of timely action. Meanwhile, Devarshi Narad arrived in the court and informed the Lord of Yudhisthir's intention to organise a grand Rajsuy Yagya and his cordial invitation for the Lord to attend the ceremony. Lord asked his friend Uddhav for an advice as to where He ought to go first - to Indraprasth in Rajsuy Yagya or to liberate the king from the captivity of Jarasandh. Uddhav advised Lord to go to Indraprasth first. There He would be able to serve both the purposes.

LORD'S DEPARTURE FOR INDRAPRASTHA

Uddhav's advice was in the interest of all. Everyone supported it. Taking permission from His priest and teachers, Lord set out on a chariot with the

whole family to reach Indraprasth. In Indraprasth, Pandavas accorded the Lord with warm-hearted felicitations. By the dictate of Lord, Mayasur built a divine looking court for Yudhishthir. The courtroom was a marvellous piece of architecture. The shinning, smooth, floor of it appeared like water, while water bodies presented a look like marble floors.

KILLING OF JARASANDH

During Yudhisthir's Rajsuy Yagya, all the Pandavas set out in all the directions to conquer the kings and expand the boundaries of their kingdom. Warriors like Bheema, Arjun defeated great kings all around and extended the boundaries of Yudhisthir's empire. But to defeat Jarasandh, - Bheema, Arjuna and Lord Krishna went in the guise Brahmins. They reached Jarasandh capital Girivraj and prayed him for donations. Jarasandh promised to give them the things of their desires. Lord Krishna then introduced them and begged Jarasandh for a duel with any of them. Jarasandh accepted to fight a duel with Bheema. He gave Bheema a mace and both of them came out to the outskirts of the town, where they began their duel. Both of them were equally strong and equally brave and well pitted.

Twenty-seven days passed, but their duel remained inconclusive. On the twenty-eighth day, during the fight, Lord signalled Bheema a way to kill Jarasandh. He took a small twig in his hands and tore it apart into two. Bheema understood the signal and beating Jarasandh on ground, he tore him apart in two pieces and threw them in opposite directions. Thus came the end of evil Jarasandh. Lord Krishna and Arjuna heartily greeted Bheema for his success. They then enthroned Jarasandh's son Sahadev and also got the captive kings released.

SALVATION OF SHISHUPAL

King Yudhishthir had invited great Vedic Brahmins and Acharayas on the occasion. Persons from Kauravas side like Drona, Bheeshma, Kripacharya, Dhritarashtra, Vidur and Duryodhan etc. were too invited to witness the celebrations. Even Brahma, Shiv, Indra, Gandharvas, Vidyadhar had too arrived. But before the Yagya could start a dispute cropped up among the great sages as to who ought to be worshipped first in the Yagya.

In the opinion of Sahadev (youngest of the Pandava brothers, not the son of Jarasandh), Lord Krishna deserved the first worship. Every one supported him. Only Shishupal could not tolerate the decision.

He stood up and said: "In the presence of such great ascetics, savants, polymaths and sages, how can this cowherd deserve the first worship." Despite Shishupal bitter remarks Lord Krishna kept quiet. But Shishupal did not. Encouraged by Lord's silence he began to attack the kings, who stood by Lord's side, with sword. He was simultaneously abusing Lord Krishna also. Lord had assured Shishupal of this forgiveness for up to one hundred sins. But now

Shishupal's sins have crossed that permitted number. So, quieting all, Lord cut his head with His wheel. As soon as the dead body of Shishupal fell on the ground, a flame emerged from it and merged with Lord Krishna. Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, feelings of hostility had been accumulating in the heart of Shishupal for his past three births against Lord Krishna. It was because of these intense hostile feelings that Shishupal met salvation eventually.

After the salvation of Shishupal, ceremonies and rituals of Yagya proceeded unabated. At the end king Yudhishthir presented all those present there with fitting gifts and took ceremonial bath. At the request of Pandavas, lord Krishna stayed in Indraprasth for many months.

SALVATION OF SHALV

Shukdev says: "Parikshit, now listen to the tale of how Lord caused salvation for Shalv. Shalv was the childhood friend of Shishupal and had attended the marriage of Rukmani as a member of Shishupal's wedding party. At that time, Yaduvanshis had defeated them all including Jarasandh and Shalv. Right at that moment, Shalv had resolved to destroy Yaduvanshis and began worshipping Gods of the gods Pashupati (Shiv). Lord Ashutosh Shiva was pleased with him. As a boon, Shalv had got an aeroplane that was invincible even for the gods, demons, humans, Nagas, etc and was particularly formidable for Yaduvanshis. By the dictate of Lord Shiva, the demon Maya constructed such an aeroplane of iron. The aeroplane named Saubh was as big as a city and was difficult to be spotted or caught. It could move as fast as one's wishes. Soon after getting the aeroplane, Shalv launched an attack of Dwarka.

Surrounding Dwarka, Shalv began to destroy buildings and houses there. Seeing the people terrorised, Pradyumn consoled them to be fearless and he set out on a chariot to counter Shalv. He pierced Shalv with arrows. But Shalva's minister Dyumana attacked Pradyumna with a mace. By the blow of the mace, Pradyumn lost his consciousness. But soon he came around and began to slay Shalv's forces. The fierce battle continued for twenty-seven days. Lord was away then in Indraprasth Yagya. But He was sure that in his absence Kshatriya kings of Shishupal side would be attacking on Dwarka.

Lord reached Dwarka and saw a fierce battle between Pradyumn and Shalv. Seeing Lord arrive, Shalv began to attack Him with sharp arrows. Lord hit Shalv with a powerful blow of mace and he began to spit blood from his mouth. He then tried to show many illusions and showered Lord with weapons. But Lord wounded Shalv with his arrows, broke his aeroplane with his mace. Very soon thereafter the aeroplane plunged in to the sea. Shalv then attacked Lord with mace but Lord cut his head with Sudarshan wheel. Seeing his end, all the gods showered flowers on Lord.

SALVATION OF DANTVAKTRA AND VIDURATH

After the killing of Shishupal, Shalv etc. Dantvaktra arrived in the battlefield carrying a mace. When Lord saw him coming, He too jumped down from the chariot and balked his movement with a mace. Dantvaktra tried to humiliate God with his abuses and hit him on head with his mace. Lord easily bore the blow of mace and hit Dantvaktra's chest with his mace named Kaumodaki. Dantvaktra's heart tore apart by the blow and he fell dead.

Vidurath was the brother of Dantvaktra. He came in the field with sword and shield to avenge his brother's death. Seeing him ready to launch an attack, Lord cut Vidurath's head with his wheel. Thus, Lord Krishna entered Dwarka only after killing Shalv, Dantvaktra and Vidurath. All the gods and other inhabitants of heaven showered flowers on Him.

SUDAMA: THE LORD'S FRIEND

During his stay as a disciple at the hermitage of sage Sandipani, Lord Krishna had a Brahmin friend named Sudama. He was very indifferent in nature with no desires for the material things. After their education, Lord Krishna came to Dwarka while Sudama, who had no any inclination for accumulating material wealth, got married and began to pass his life with his wife Susheela in abject poverty. One day his wife Susheela said: "O lord, your friend Krishna is the king of Dwarka. He is very benevolent to Brahmins and his devotees. If you go to see him, he will understand your miseries and grant you a lot of wealth." But Sudama plainly refused saying: "Devi, I have chosen the path of devotion for self upliftment and not for the wealth." Susheela, however, kept of insisting: "All right, don't go for the wealth. But at least you can go to see your old friend. Sudama accepted this proposition, thinking that only the sight of Lord yields supreme benefit to the devotee. But he wanted something as a gift to present to his old friend. At this, his wife tied four handfuls of raw rice in a bundle.

With that humble gift, Sudama set out for Dwarka. His poverty was at its helm. But he kept on reciting Lord's name all along the way. After walking for some distance, Sudama felt thirsty. He drank water, quenched his thirst and thanked God that He at least does give water to drink. Sudama kept on walking the whole day. In the evening, he kept the bundle of rice under his head as a pillow and slept.

Now it was God's turn to show His gratitude for the devotee. When Sudama awoke in the morning, he found himself right in front of Lord Krishna's palace. At first he could not believe his eyes; but the people told him that he was in Dwarka and standing right before the lord's palace. Sudama requested the gatekeeper to inform Lord Krishna that his childhood friend Sudama had come. Lord Krishna was sitting in the company of Rukmani when the gatekeeper delivered the message. As soon as Lord Krishna learned about Sudama's arrival, He stood up and ran helter-skelter to welcome his childhood friend. At the gate He cordially embraced Sudama and escorted him into his private chamber and made him sit on the throne.

Krishna and queen Rukmani both washed Sudama's feet one by one. By the mere touch of his friend, Krishna was feeling overjoyed. His eyes filled with tears. He and Sudama were holding each other's hands. Their hearts were beating with the memories of their period as disciples at the hermitage of Sandipani. For long, none of them could utter a word. At last Sudama said: "O Jagadguru Krishna, I have the fortune of being your friend. What remains for me to do?"

Lord Krishna said: "Brother, have you brought for me something sent by my sister-in-law? I love to accept even the pettiest thing presented with affection." At the Lord's words, Sudama felt ashamed and he did not reveal the four handfuls of raw rice that he had brought as gift. With shame, Sudama began to look at the ground. Lord knew everything that his dear friend Sudama had never remembered him with a desire for wealth. This time too he has come at the insistence of his wife. 'Hence, I will give him the wealth that is rare even for the gods,' thought Lord Krishna and snatched the bundle of raw rice and opened it with great respect. He put one handful of it in his mouth. When Lord proceeded to take next handful, queen Rukmani held his hand and prayed: "O Vishvambhar (fosterer of the world) for the prosperity of entire world this one handful is sufficient."

Sudama stayed that night in the palace of Shri Krishna. There he experienced the comfort of Vaikunth (abode of God). Staying there for many days, Sudama at last, took leave of Shri Krishna and set out for his home. Lord did not give Sudama anything apparently nor did Sudama asked for His favour. He was travelling overwhelmed by a divine sense of devotion and felt that Krishna might have not given him wealth lest he should forget Him.

Thus, sunk in myriad kinds of thoughts, Sudama reached his home. But at the place, where his dilapidated hut stood once there was now a divine palace surrounded by verdant gardens. The floors of the palace were embedded with precious gems and stones. Standing at the gate, Sudama felt confused, when his wife Susheela came out with scented water to welcome him. Tears were rolling on her cheeks. With love she greeted Sudama and escorted him inside the palace. Sudama was still reflecting over the God's grace and praying: "May I have the friendship of lord in every birth, may my affection increase for Lord's feet. I don't want wealth.” Since then, Sudama enjoyed the comforts of the palace as the bounty of Lord bestowed upon him by none other than the Lord Krishna himself. His devotion increased day by day.

MEETING OF LORD WITH GOPIS

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, Lord Krishna was passing his time with pleasure in Dwarka. A total solar eclipse happened to fall during that period. People from all over India thronged in Kurukshetra to take a dip in sacred Ganges on that great occasion. All the Yaduvanshis too arrived there. When Vrajvasis

(Inhabitants of Vraj) learned about Krishna and Balaram's arrival in Kurukshetra, they too assembled there.

During the festival, Lord Krishna met His foster-father Nand and other cowherds who were his childhood friends. Lord Krishna met the Gopis also who had been pining for his sight since long. They enjoyed the meeting and kept on chatting for long. Overwhelmed by love and joy, Vasudev embraced Nand. Lord Krishna and Balaram respectfully greeted mother Yashoda and father Nand. They too embraced Krishna-Balaram cordially.

Gopis were specially overwhelmed by Lord's sight. They had no other desire but to have a sight of Lord. That day their long cherished dream had come true. Gopis imbued the captivating appearance of Lord and experienced the joy of embracing Him. Lord met all the Gopis and embraced them. Inquired about their well being and preached them with spiritual knowledge. By the virtue of that knowledge, feeling of living disappeared among the Gopis and they merged with God forever.

ORGANISATION OF YAGYA BY VASUDEV

Devarshi Narad, Vyasa and many other great sages arrived in Kurukshetra to have a sight of Lord. Lord welcomed them all. Then Vasudev greeted them and enquired about way for his self-upliftment. Laughingly, Narad said: "Vasudev, a person, already living at the bank of the Ganges, discards her holy water and goes to other places of pilgrimage for his purification.

In the presence of Krishna-Balaram, the sages said: "You regard the indescribable, eternal, Sachchidanand Shri Krishna as your son, and seek the way of your self upliftment from us. O Vasudev, recognise Him. Take to His refuge, only He can salve you." Vasudev got the meaning of sage's words and began to develop feelings of devotion for his son. Every human being has obligation for the gods, sages and his ancestors. The sages got a Yagya performed in Kurukshetra by Vasudev to free him from the obligation for gods.

REVISTING OF DEVAKI'S SIX SONS

In Dwarka, Krishna and Balaram used to greet their parent's first daily in the morning. Now Vasudev had recognised His identity. So after their return from Kurukshetra, when Krishna-Balaram went as usual to greet their parents, Vasudev greeted them first. Lord Krishna then preached his father about the metaphysical knowledge. With that knowledge, Vasudev began to see Krishna everywhere.

Mother Devaki was also present there. Memory of her six children, who were killed by Kansa, was still afresh in her mind. She had heard that Krishna had fetched the dead son of Sandipani from Yamloka. So she prayed to them " You both are venerable even to the gods. Kindly grant me my desire. Show me my

six sons who were killed by Kansa. By their mother's dictate and helped by Yogmaya, both the brothers reached Sutal Loka.

The demon king Bali welcomed them there and offered them a seat, and washed their feet. King Bali then asked God what could he do for Him. Lord said: O demon king, in Swayambhu Manvantara, six sons were born to Urna the wife of Prajapati Marichi. They were all gods. They had once seen Brahma trying to copulate with his own daughter and hence derided at him. Indignant Brahma had then cursed them to take birth in demon incarnation. They therefore were born as the sons of Hiranyakashipu.

In the present era, Yogmaya had made them born as Devaki's sons who were killed by Kansa. They are all now in your Loka. Mother Devaki is mourning for them, so we shall take them with us. They will thus be freed from the curse and go to their heavenly abode." Thus Lord Krishna and Balaram brought those six babies to Dwarka and handed them to mother Devaki. Seeing her babies again, Devaki's heart filled with love for her sons. Milk began to flood her breasts. She breast-fed them. Drinking the milk, all the babies received salvation. They then departed to their heavenly abode.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE OF SUBHADRA AND ARJUN

King Parikshit asked: "Gurudev, how did my grandfather Arjun and grandmother Subhadra got married? I want to hear this tale. Kindly narrate it to me."

Shukdev said: Parikshit once travelling on a pilgrimage tour, Arjun reached in Prabhas region. There he learned that Balaram was desirous of marrying his sister Subhadra to Duryodhan. But Vasudev and Krishna were not in the favour of this marriage. So, a strong urge took hold in his mind to get Subhadra as his wife. Acting as per the urge, Arjun reached Dwarka in the guise of Vaishnav sage. It was rainy season then, so with an excuse of Chaturmasya Vrata (four months long fast), Arjun stayed in Dwarka. During his stay, Balaram served and looked after him very well. But neither Balaram nor any other inmates of the palace could recognise Arjun.

Once Balaram invited Arjun to his home. There he offered good, delicious food to Arjun. Subhadra too served him well. There, they fell in love with each other. Later on, boarding a chariot, Subhadra went out of the palace for a joy ride. At the outskirts of the town, Arjun was awaiting for her. He had already taken permission of Devaki-Vasudev and Krishna. Subhadra too had silently nodded her acceptance.

So that evening Arjun and Subhadra eloped from Dwarka. The news of Subhadra eloping with Arjun first outraged Balaram. But Lord Krishna and other near and dear ones convinced and pacified him.

RELEASE OF SHIVA FROM CRISIS

Maitreya asked: "Gurudev, those among the gods, human beings and the demons, who worship Lord Shiva, get wealth very soon. But those, who worship Lord Narayana, remain afflicted with scarcity. What is the reason for that?"

In reply, Lord Krishna had said: "O Yudhishthir, I take away all the wealth from those whom I bestow my grace. When they are poor, their relatives desert them. I even render their efforts useless when they try to earn money. Thus being unsuccessful repeatedly, the people develop an attitude of indifference for wealth. Then they begin to take shelter as my devotee and mingle with me. Only then, I bestow my full grace on them and they receive me as Sachchidanand ParaBrahma. Thus, pleasing me through my worship is extremely difficult. Hence, ordinary people give me up and worship other deities, which are in fact different forms of me. Lord Shiva is Ashutosh and bestows his devotees quickly with grace. He gives wealth and other riches to his devotees. But once they get wealth, the devotees become despotic and even forget the God who had blessed them."

Once upon a time, there was a demon Vrikasur. He had pleased Lord Shiva and sought a boon that the person, upon whose head the demon put his hand, should be incinerated at once. Lord Shiva granted the boon without considering the consequences. But as soon as the demon got this supernatural power, he ran to incinerate Lord Shiva first. The demon was eyeing Gauri Parvati, so he was determined to eliminate Lord Shiva. Now afraid of his own boon, Lord Shiva ran for his life, with the demon following him in hot pursuit. At last Shiva reached in Vaikunth and told Lord Vishnu about his crisis. Lord at once illumined the demon and made him put his hand, on his own head. By the virtue of the boon, the demon was incinerated in no time and thus Lord Shiva could be saved.

TESTING OF TRINITY

Once upon a time, all the sages assembled on the bank of Saraswati River. A dispute erupted among them as to who among the trinity was the greatest. By consensus they appointed sage Bhrigu to test the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Bhrigu reached to Brahma, but did not greet him. Brahma got infuriated but since the sage Bhrigu was his son, He did not curse him. Then Bhrigu visited Shiva. Lord Shiva proceeded to embrace the sage. But instead of accepting Shiva's welcome, the sage began to abuse Him, saying: "You violate the dignity of Vedas, so I will not meet with you." Angry Shiva raised his trident to kill him, but Bhagwati stopped Him. At last Bhrigu reached Vaikunth to see Lord Vishnu.

Lord was lying with head in the lap of Lakshmi. Bhrigu kicked hard at His chest. But instead of getting angry, Lord got up, bowed his head before the sage and begged pardon: "O Sage, pardon me, I could not welcome you at once, at your arrival. Your feet are soft, I hope they are not hurt. All my sins have been

washed by the touch of your feet." Bhrigu felt very pleased by the serious talks of Lord. His heart felt overwhelmed with excess of devotion. He returned to the assembly of the sages and narrated his experience. Since then Lord Vishnu is regarded as the Supreme and giver of peace and fearlessness.

REVIVAL OF BRAHMN'S DEAD CHILDREN

There in Dwarka lived a Brahmin. When the first son was born to his wife, it died immediately after birth. The Brahmin took his dead son to the royal court and complained: "My Son has died because of anti-Brahmin and licentious actions of the king." One by one, thus, eight sons were born to the Brahmin couple; but they all died immediately after birth. And the Brahmin kept on dumping his dead sons at the gate of the royal palace.

When his ninth son was born, and died, Arjun was also there in Dwarka. He made a promise to the Brahmins: I shall guard your son or commit self-immolation. At the time of next delivery, the agitated Brahmin came to Arjun. Training his bow and arrows, Arjun made all arrangements to protect Brahmin's tenth son. Sanctified by many mantras, Arjun's arrows constructed a fence around the labour room. A child took birth; but it too died after some time. Brahmin, then, cursed Arjun.

Arjun scouted through all the three worlds and even the netherworlds in search of the Brahmin's dead son, but he could not find him anywhere. Ultimately accepting his failure and as per his promise, Arjun proceeded to immolate himself.

Meanwhile, Lord Krishna too learned about Arjun's vow and stopped him from self-immolation. Thereafter, riding a divine chariot, Lord set out with Arjun, towards west. Beyond the limits of cosmos. They reached the abode of Lord Vasudev in Tripadvibhuti. There Arjun saw that Lord was present in Purushottam’s appearance. Shri Krishna and Arjun greeted Him.

Lord Purushottam said in a serious voice: "O Krishna and Arjuna, only to have a sight of both of you, I brought the Brahmin's sons to me. Both of you had taken incarnation on earth from my part to protect the religion. All the demons have been slain by now. Now you too return to me.

Shri Krishna and Arjun again greeted Lord and returned on earth with all the sons of the Brahmin. Arjun was greatly surprised to see the supreme abode of Lord. He felt that whatever strength a living being had, it been all by Shri Krishna's grace. Like common, ordinary people, the Lord stayed on earth enjoying mundane comforts, performed Yagyas like kings, behaved like idealistic people; deterred His subjects and slayed evil kings to re-establish religion on earth.

3.5.6 The Sages Curse Yaduvanshis

Parashar said: "As the time passed, Yaduvanshis grew stronger and more influential. Now no longer did they like the welcoming and treating of the great sages by the Lord. Lord Krishna knew about their disliking, but secretly He was pleased by this change in Yaduvanshi's behaviour, for He knew that by disregarding the saints and the scriptures, they would meet their end sooner.

Once the Yaduvanshis clothed Jambvati's son Samb in a woman's attire and, showing him to the sages asked mockingly: "Maharaja, this is our sister-in-law. She is an expecting mother. She feels shy to ask but tell us what will be born to her?

Through their unfailing vision, the Sages knew the reality and said: "Fools, a pestle shall be born to her and that pestle shall exterminate the entire Yaduvansha. Now all the Yaduvanshis were perplexed by sages' prediction, and approached their king Ugrasen. But, even the king was helpless now because he could not change the words the pious sages. In due course, a pestle was born to Samb. Frightened of an imminent fate, Yaduvanshis crushed the pestle into a fine powder and threw it into the sea. Only a nail remained, that also was thrown into the sea where a fish swallowed it. A fisher caught the fish and cut it open and found the nail. He gave it to a hunter. The hunter fixed the nail in the head of his arrow. On the other hand, the sea waves washed the powder of the pestle ashore where it germinated and grew as luxuriant grasses. Later on, once all the Yaduvanshis assembled at the seashore for a picnic where they drank wine and began to fight with one another under intoxication. Soon their quarrel grew so high that they pulled out the grasses, which were growing there, to use as the arms. With the grasses the Yaduvanshis beat one another to death.

NARAD PREACHES VASUDEV ABOUT BHAGAWAT

Once Narad arrived in Dwarka. Vasudev prayed him and requested to provide him with pious company of Bhagwat Dharma. Narad said: "O king, once upon a time, nine great sages arrived in the court of the king Janak. King Janak had put the same curiosity before them also. I will narrate the conversation that followed there between the sages and the king."

First of all, the first Yogishwar Kavi said: "O king Janak, dedication is the first duty (Dharma) of a Vaishnav. He should devote everything - his actions, fruits of actions and even himself, at the feet of Lord. He ought to hear about Lord's virtues. Such a devotee shall be indifferent to the worldly affairs and shall laugh, dance or sing occasionally and sanctified all the three worlds." The king then asked about the characteristics of the Lord's devotees. Another Yogeshwara Hari said: "A true devotee of the Lord remains unaffected by feelings like hunger, thirst, life, death, labour, pain, fear and desire. Such a devotee is the excellent kind of Bhagwat. Even the wealth of all the three worlds cannot shake the faith of such a devotee, because Lord Shri Hari himself stays in his heart."

"What is illusion?" A Yogeshwara Antariksh replied: "King, an illusion is also God's play. Having a possessive feeling about mundane is illusion. Thinking in terms of 'I', 'Me', 'Mine', 'My', 'You', 'Your' is also illusion. If one can have such an affection for God as he has for worldly things, one can easily surmount the illusion."

King Janak then asked about the method of worshipping Lord. A Yogeshwara, Karbhajan said: " O king, the Lord had a fair complexion in Satayug. People used to receive Him through methods like meditation, reconciliation, etc. In Tretayug, the Lord had reddish complexion and Yagyas were the main means to achieve Him. In Dwaparyug, the Lord had yellowish complexion and He could be pleased through worships. In the present Kaliyuga, Lord has dark complexion and one can receive Him through means like recitation, narration and hearing of His name and plays.

Thus, Narad preached Vasudev about Bhagwat Dharma. Now the heart and mind of Vasudev were thoroughly clean and pure.

LORD DEPARTS TO HIS ABODE AND DESTRUCTION OF YADUVANSHIS

To remind the Lord about the moment of His departure, Brahma arrived in Dwarka accompanied by all the gods. He prayed to Him: "O Lord, you have completed your duty of what we had once requested you. Now, You please return to your abode. Lord said: "On the seventh day from now, Dwarka shall submerge in the sea and Yadavas shall fight among themselves to death. I too shall depart then. The arrow of a hunter shall be the cause of my departure."

When Uddhav learned that Lord was about to wind up His plays, he approached Him and said: "I understand, O Lord, that this all is happening by your wish. But I cannot part for a moment from your feet. Hence, take me also with you to your abode." Lord said: "Uddhav, I will not go anywhere. My entire brilliance will be present in Shrimad Bhagwat. You stay here preaching Bhagwat Dharma." Saying thus, lord preached Uddhav about the Geeta Gyana through the tale of Avadhoot.

Lord narrated thus: "Uddhav, Once, our ancestor Yadu happened to see Lord Dattatreya in a forest. Lord was indulged in the supreme joy in the guise of Avadhoot. Yadu asked him about the reasons for his whimsical state." Avadhoot had said: "O king, making the various animals, birds, insects etc as my teacher, I have learned about spirituality from them. That is why I am free from mourning and attachment. Earth, air, sky, water, fire, the moon the sun, pigeon, python, sea, grasshopper, bumblebee, honey bee, elephant, extractor of honey, deer, fish, prostitute, osprey, boy, girls, arrow-maker, snake, spider and wasp are all my teachers. I took refuge at these twenty-four teachers and learned from their behaviour.

I learned forgiveness from earth, purity from the sky, holiness and cleanliness from the water, innocence and renunciation from the fire; indifferentness from the air, to remain unaffected by circumstances from moon, abdication from the Sun, incoherence from the pigeon, dependence upon fate and remain effortless from the python, to remain always happy and serious from the sea, to be under the control of sense organs and hence meet total destruction from the grasshopper, acquiring of virtues from bumblebee, fault in cumulating from honey bee, to abstain sensuous talks from the Deer, to eliminate greed from the fish, sorrow in hope and happiness in desperation from the prostitute, to feel happy in uncertainty from osprey, dispute among many from the girls, concentration from the arrow-maker, to roam alone and detachment from a particular place from the snake, virtues of the creator Lord from the spider, and I learned similarity from the wasp."

In the guise of Avadhoot, Lord Dattatreya says: "O king, I learned wisdom and apathy from my body also, because life, death, life and death again are inseparably intertwined with it. Hence the net result of loving this body is nothing but sorrow. Thus our own body also helps us to learn about metaphysical knowledge.

Lord Krishna also explained Uddhav regarding futility of physical and heavenly luxuries. This human body is like a tree, on which two birds - Jeevatma and Paramatma (microcosm and supreme soul) - have taken shelter. Two fruits - happiness and sorrow - appear on it. Jeevatma (microcosm) eats these fruits while Paramatma (supreme soul) stays as an indifferent onlooker. There are three kinds of Jeev - Baddh (Bound), Bhakt (devotee) and Mukt (liberated). Baddh Jeevas (bound souls) are those who indulge in sensual pleasures and those who dislike pious company. Mukt Jeev (liberated souls) are those who are free from attachment and bindings. Bhakt (devotees) are those who meditate on me and dedicate their everything in my feet and have love for my virtues. My devotee is kind, free from flaws, tolerant, has feeling of fraternity for all and controls his desires.

BHIKSHU GEET

Lord said: "Uddhav, in the world, there is indeed a dearth of such tolerant people who can tolerate bitter remarks of evil ones. In this context there is a tale of a greedy Brahmin who lived in Ujjain. That Brahmin had been badly tormented by the evil people after he had lost his wealth. But still the Brahmin did not lose his patience and regarding his present state as a result of his previous birth's deeds, he expressed his feelings thus:

These people are not the cause of my miseries; neither the gods, nor body, even planets and time, can be blamed for my miseries. Scriptures and learned ones held the mind itself guilty of one's miseries. It is the mind that runs the cycle of the world and makes every kind of efforts.

In the absence of mind, even the soul is rendered motionless. When one accepts the dictates of the mind and indulges in sensual pleasures, soul too comes to be bound with them. The ultimate outcome of all the spiritual efforts like celibacy, study of Vedas etc. and abidance to pious actions is the concentration of mind. Concentration of mind and is abstaintation from sensual pleasures are the primary conditions for attainment of Paramyoga (supreme meditation). Thus Lord preached Uddhav about Gyana Geeta. Uddhav too took Bhagwat (which is a form of the Lord) with honour and departed for Badrikashrama.

3.6 Chapter 6 (Part 6)

This chapter contains 1 section.

3.6.1 Descriptions of Dynasties in Kali-Yuga

Parashar describes about the dynasties that would occur in Kaliyug. Ripunjay or Puranjay would be the last king of Brihdrath dynasty. The kings of Nand dynasty would succeed this dynasty. Then a diplomat Brahmin, named Chanakya, would exterminate this dynasty and enthrone Chandragupta Maurya. In Maurya dynasty, a great king would occur by the name of Ashokvardhan. After him, Yavans would rule then for six hundred and forty years. Their rule would be succeeded by the governance of the fair-complexioned foreigners, who would rule for one hundred and sixty years. Thereafter, there would be no king and no subjects because people from all the classes would come forward to rule.

The ruler would be selected by the majority votes. There would be no any thing like holiness. Cows would grow thin like nannies. People would not marry, as per their castes. Greed, selfishness and sex would be the base of marriage life. In adverse conditions, spouses would desert each other. There would be nothing like duty, responsibility and conduct. Hair would be the main item of adornment for the women.

People would not have the knowledge of religious scriptures in Kaliyug. Talkativeness would be identified with knowledge. Only those would be regarded as clever, who could pick others' pockets. Children would not regard or pay due respect to their parents. Children would maintain relations with parents till their marriage only, not after that. Boys would not touch the feet of their own parents, but would pay full respect to their father and mother-in-law, Brother-in-law would be dearer to them than their own brother. Parashar says: Kaliyug is the mine of faults, but it has only one great virtue - that the people will acquire divine position only by reciting Lord's name. Recitation of Lord's name, regardless of intention and motivation– whether it is love, derision, laziness or maliceness- would destroy one's sins.

But the sinister people would do even the most difficult tasks in Kaliyug, but they would not recite Lord's name. They would not have an interest in the Lord. Their interests would be more in sensuous things like sound, touch, beauty, scent etc.

The Paramgati (supreme salvation) that people could receive by ten thousand years of meditation in Satayug; by performing Yagya for hundred years in Tretayug and by worshipping Lord’s idol for ten years in Dwapar, that supreme salvation is easily available for people in Kaliyug simply by reciting Lord's name for one day and one night continuously. But still, in Kaliyug people would not have faith in Lord's name. It is their misfortune.

4 Skanda Purana

Largest of all the Puranas. Contains eighty eight thousand and one hundred Shlokas (stanzas). Has seven parts- Maheshwar, Vaishnava, Brahma, Kashi, Avanti, Nagar and Prabhasa. Purana got its name from Skand (Kartikeya) the son of Lord Shiva. Birth of Skand; its reason and effects constitute the main theme. Kartikeya was the commander of the gods' army and had killed the demon Tarkasura.

This Purana contains 7 chapters.

4.1 Maheshwar Khand

This Chapter contains 20 sections.

4.1.1 Daksha's Animosity towards Lord Shiva

Skanda Puran begins with the eulogy of Lord Shiva–

**YASYAGYA JAGAT SRISHTA VIRANCHIH PALKO HARIH;
SANHARTA KAALRUDRAKHYO NAMASTASMAI PINAKINE.**

(Meaning)— Salutations to Lord Shankar who has entrusted the job of creation to Lord Brahma–Who has instructed Lord Vishnu to nurture the world and who himself acts as the supreme annihilator.During ancient times, once, Sage Shaunak had performed a grand 'yagya' at his hermitage in Naimisharanya forest. Many sages had thronged Naimisharanya to attend it. One of them was Sage Lomesh.After the yagya was over, all the assembled Sages requested Sage Lomesh to narrate the divine tales of Lord Shiva.
Sage Lomesh said–Daksha-Prajapati had got his daughter, Sati married to Lord Shiva. Once, he had performed a grand yagya in which he had invited everybody except his own son-in-law.When Sati learnt about the yagya, she sought Lord Shiva's permission to attend that yagya. Lord Shiva tried to convince her that it was not proper to attend a ceremony in which one had not been invited. But Sati did not pay any heed and was bent upon attending that yagya. Ultimately, Lord Shiva had no option but to give his conscent. But he did not forget to send his 'Rudraganas' with her for her protection.

4.1.2 Sati jumps into the Sacrificial Fire

When Sati reached her father's place, she saw a grand yagya being performed. A large number of people had been invited–the deities, the sages and the hermits.

Sati became sad because Daksha had invited everybody except her husband. She knew quite well that it was a deliberate decision on part of her father, not to invite Lord Shiva. But, she got infuriated when she found that Daksha had not even kept Shiva's share in the yagya while the 'shares' of other deities had been kept.

When Daksha saw Sati, he was enraged—How dare you come here? Your husband is an embodiment of inauspiciousness. He is the Lord of the spirits, ghosts and all types of mean powers. This was the reason why I did not invite him.'

The insult heaped on her husband in front of everybody devastated Sati. She felt so humiliated that she decided to give up her life. Before any one could understand, she jumped into the sacrificial fire and was charred to death. All the deities present there were stunned by this sudden development. All the 'Rudraganas' mourned Sati's death with deep sorrow.Meanwhile, Lord Shiva got the sad news from Narad. He got mad with anger and uprooted some hair from his scalp. He then dashed the hair against a mountain. There was a thundering sound and Veerbhadra manifested within a split second. Lord Shiva ordered him to punish Daksha for his evil deed, which caused the death of Sati.Veerbhadra proceeded with a huge army of spirits, ghosts and marudganas to punish Daksha. When he reached the oblation site, Daksha and all the other deities became scarred. But, Sage Bhrigu came at the deities' rescue and told them not to worry. He then chanted few mantras, which helped the deities to win the first round of the battle.

The defeat of his army enraged Veerbhadra to such an extent that he created havoc in the ranks of deities' army. He showered volleys of arrow on them, which forced the deities to make a hasty retreat from there. Veerbhadra dashed Sage Bhrigu against the ground and uprooted his beard. He then severed the head of Daksha and threw it in flames of sacrificial fire.Lord Brahma took the refuge of Lord Shiva and requested him to stop Veerbhadra from causing further death and destruction. Lord Shiva told Brahma–'Nobody else but Daksha himself was responsible for his death.But, Lord Brahma requested Lord Shiva to make Daksha alive once again. Lord Shiva then went to Daksha's place and fixed a goat's head on the trunk of Daksha's body. This way Daksha became alive once again albeit with a goats body. He was very ashamed of his behaviour and requested Lord Shiva to forgive him. Lord Shiva blessed him and said–

"Salvation can not be attained merely by performing the rituals. If you are desirous of salvation then engage yourself in virtuous deeds with."

4.1.3 Virtues of Worshipping Lord Shiva

Sage Lomesh told the assembled sages— One who brooms the courtyard of Shiva temple attains to Shiva loka. Those who make offerings of incense to lord Shiva not only liberate himself from the bondage of this world but also both his 'Kulas'. One who gets constructed a Shiva temple or renovates it, attains incomparable virtue. One who chants the holy mantra 'OM NAMAH SHIVAY' daily and begins his day by visiting Shiva temple in the morning becomes absolved of all his sins.

4.1.4 Churning of the Ocean

Sage Lomesh narrated the tale, which described how Indra lost heaven after he showed disrespect to Vrihaspati–

Once, Indra was enjoying the songs sung by Gandharvas when sage Vashishth arrived. But, Indra was so engrossed in music, that he forgot to welcome his distinguished guest. Sage Vashishth was enraged by his behaviour and went away fuming with anger.When the demon King Bali–the lord of Patalloka, learnt about this incident he attacked Indraloka with a large army. A fierce battle took place in which all the deities were defeated. Bali and his army brought all the wealth to Patalloka. But the demons were not destined to be the owner of this plundered wealth for too long as the whole wealth got submerged into the ocean. Bali was surprised and asked Shukracharya about the reason. Sage Shukracharya revealed to Bali that he could not enjoy the splendours of deities' wealth because he had not performed 100 Ashwamedha yagyas.

The deities, after being defeated went to seek Lord Vishnu's help. Lord Brahma was also present with them. After giving a deep thought to the whole issue, Lord Vishnu advised them to patch up with the demons so that all the wealth could be retrieved from the ocean bed.The deities went to Patal-loka and convinced the demons to participate in the churning of the ocean. When the process of churning of the ocean began, Mandarachal mountain was used as a churner and the serpent -Vasuki as the rope.Both the parties immersed the Mandarachal mountain into the ocean but it sank down, as there was no base upon which it could be placed. So, Lord Vishnu took the form of a tortoise and held the mountain on his back.

Churning of the ocean resulted into the emergence of many things like Chandrama, Surabhi (cow), Kalpa tree, Kaustubh, Uchchaihshrava (Horse), Eravat (elephant), goddess Laxmi, poison, ambrosia, intoxication etc.When poison emerged from the sea bed, neither the deities nor the demons made any claim for it. The poison was so venomous that the whole world started getting inflamed by it. Lord Shiva then drank the Halahal poison and thus the world was saved.Lord Vishnu accepted goddess Laxmi as his consort.

4.1.5 The Emergence of Ambrosia

When Dhanvantri appeared with a pot of ambrosia in his hands, a demon named Vrishparva snatched it from him. All the demons then fled to Patal loka with the pot of ambrosia.Lord Vishnu disguised himself as an enchanting beauty and went to Patalloka. There, he found all the demons quarrelling among themselves. Each of them wanted to have his own share of ambrosia.The demons were stunned by Mohini's beauty the moment they saw Lord Vishnu in the form of a beautiful lady. Mohini took control of the ambrosia pot and summoned the deities to Patal loka.

All the deities and demons were made to sit in separate rows. Mohini then started distributing ambrosia to the deities. A demon named Rahu, who had disguised himself as a deity was also sitting among the deities. Hardly had Rahu gulped down some ambrosia then Mohini severed his head on the information given by chandrama (Moon).The severed head of Rahu tried to take revenge by swallowing chandrama, who took the refuge of Lord Shiva. Shiva kept chandrama within the lock of his hair. Meanwhile, Rahu too came chasing chandrama and Lord Shiva wore his head as a garland in his neck.

4.1.6 Lord Brahma's Boon to Tarakasur

After the death of Sati, Lord Shiva became aloof and engaged himself in an austere penance. His lack of interest in performing his duties resulted into the predominance of sin in the world.A demon named Tarakasur had received a boon of invincibility from lord Brahma. Only a child and nobody else could kill him. Tarakasur, being drunk with power started to torment the deities.

All the deities eulogized Lord Brahma and they heard a heavenly voice saying—

'Nobody can kill Tarakasur except Shiva's son. So you must put all your efforts to help Shiva get married.'

The deities were aware that after the death of Sati, Shiva had lost all interest in life and was living like a recluse. Nevertheless, they wanted to give a try. So they went to Himalaya, who had no progeny at that time and requested him to beget a girl. Himalaya agreed, as he was aware of the misdeeds of Tarakasur.In course of time, Himalaya's wife, Mena gave birth to a girl child who was in fact the reincarnation of Sati. The girl child was named Girija.Girija was brought up with great love and care. When she attained the age of eight, Himalaya once took her to the cave where Lord Shiva was doing penance. Initially, Shiva was little hesitant to meet Himalaya because Girija was accompanying her father and he had vowed never to put his glance on any woman after the death of Sati. But, Later on he relented and allowed both of them to meet him whenever they liked. Now, Girija made it her habit to visit Lord Shiva regularly. She used to look after all the needs of Shiva while he was engrossed in his penance.

Even after the passage of a long time the deities' wishes did not look like getting fulfilled, as Shiva remained as nonchalant as ever. So, the deities requested Kamadeva's help in sowing the seeds of love and passion in Shiva's heart.Kamadeva went to the place where Lord Shiva was doing his penance. He tried to sow seeds of compassion in Shiva's heart only to receive his wrath. Lord Shiva was infuriated by the efforts of Kamadeva. He opened his third eye as the result of which Kamadeva was charred to death.Rati started wailing inconsolably at the death of her husband but Girija assured her that she would try to bring Kamadeva back to life.Girija commenced her penance to please Lord Shiva. There was a great turmoil in the world on account of her penance. Lord Vishnu led the deities to Shiva and requested him to marry Girija so that

the world could be protected from the torments of Tarakasur. Finally, Shiva gave his conscent and went to the place where Girija was doing penance.

4.1.7 Shiva tests Parvati's Devotion

After reaching there, Lord Shiva found Parvati engrossed in her penance. Parvati was surrounded by her few trusted companions.Lord Shiva decided to test Parvati's devotion towards him. So he disguised himself as a hermit and asked her companions about the reason why Parvati was doing such a severe Penance. Jaya, one of Parvati's companions informed him that her friend was doing penance in order to get Lord Shiva as her husband. Jaya also informed Lord Shiva that her friend Girija was the daughter of Himalaya.

Lord Shiva, who was in the guise of a hermit said—'Why is this tender girl so eager to marry Shiva who is an embodiment of inauspiciousness–who carries a skull in his hand and who lives in a crematorium. How can your friend think of marrying one who has been expelled by Daksha from the yagya ceremony? Does your friend know that Shiva wears a snake around his neck and is surrounded by numerous spirits and ghosts?'

Parvati, who had been listening to all those nonsensical utterances, told Jaya—'This fellow seems to abhor Shiva. We should not talk to this evil person. Tell him to leave at once.'Lord Shiva was extremely pleased by Parvati's unwavering devotion towards him. He appeared in his original form and said–'You can ask for anything you wish.'

But Parvati replied— 'O Supreme Lord! I am the same Sati for the sake of whom you had destroyed Daksha's yagya. Don't you recognize me? There is a great purpose behind my reincarnation. A son born to us would kill Tarakasur. So go to my father and request for my hand in marriage.'But Lord Shiva refused to make a request to Himalaya considering it as an undignified act. He then returned to the place where he had been meditating.After a while, Himalaya and Mena arrived there and asked Parvati how her penance had been progressing. Parvati narrated the whole incident how Lord Shiva had finally given his conscent to marry her.Himalaya and Mena were extremely pleased by this good news.

4.1.8 The Arrival of the Sapta-Rishis

Later on Lord Shiva sent the Saptarishis with the proposal of marriage to Himalaya. Himalaya received his distinguished guests with respect and enquired about the purpose of their visit. The Saptarishis replied–'We have come to request you to give your daughter's hand in marriage to Shiva.'After consulting his wife, Mena and other mountains, Himalaya agreed to accept Shiva as his son-in-law. The Saptarishis then returned and conveyed the good news to Shiva.The preparation for marriage ceremony started being made. Finally the marriage procession proceeded towards the bride's home. The marriage procession consisted of all the deities, apsaras, gandharvas even spirits and ghosts.

Sage Garg Supervised the rituals of marriage ceremony. Vishwakarma constructed the canopy, where marriage ceremony was supposed to take place.After the marriage was over, Himalaya performed the ritual of Kanyadan and this way Shiva returned with his consort.

4.1.9 Birth of Kartikeya

Lord Shiva and Parvati lived happily at Gandhamadan Mountain enjoying every bit of their conjugal life. Once it so happened that a small quantity of Shiva's sperm fell on the ground while he was enjoying intimate moments with Parvati. As a result, tremendous amount of heat was generated and the whole world started burning.Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu instructed Agni to employ some means so that the destruction caused by Shiva's over flowing sperms could come to an end.Agni went to Gandhamadan mountain in the guise of a hermit. He requested Parvati by saying—'O Mother! Please give me something as alms. I have nothing but my hands as a begging bowl'

Parvati kept Shiva's sperms on his palm, which was eaten up by Agni. Parvati was enraged to see this and cursed Agni–"You have shown disrespect to me. From today onwards you would become omnivorous. The sperms which you have devoured would cause unbearable inflammation in your body."

As the result of Parvati's curse, Agni really started experiencing unbearable inflammation in his body. He requested Lord Shiva to reveal the means by which his pain would come to an end. Lord Shiva instructed Agni to implant those sperms in any woman's womb to get rid of the unbearable inflammation.Thus, Agni, who was suffering from extreme heat that generated in his body, sat at a lonely place waiting eagerly for a woman to arrive there.He did not have to wait for too long, as six Kritikas, shivering with cold arrived there to warm themselves. The sperms of Shiva entered into their bodies through the pores. These six Kritikas became pregnant.

When their respective husbands learnt about their pregnancy they cursed them. As a result they got transformed into 'Nakshatras' and established themselves in the sky. But, they aborted their respective foetus at Himalaya mountain before getting transformed into six constellations. The holy Ganges carried that foetus to a secluded place, which was covered with dense bushes of reeds.In course of time, Lord Kartikeya manifested from those reed bushes. He had six heads. The deities were delighted at the birth of Kartikeya. Lord Shiva along with Parvati went to the place where Kartikeya had incarnated. Parvati took young Kartikeya in her embrace.

4.1.10 Kartikeya Kills Tarakasur

Lord Shiva assured the deities, who were also present there that Tarakasur's days were numbered. The deities's army then proceeded towards the battlefield.On their way, the deities heard a heavenly voice–'You can defeat the demons only if you fight under the leadership of Kartikeya.'

Now all the deities requested Kartikeya to become their leader. Menawhile, Devasena–the daughter of Mrityu arrived there and requested Kartikeya to become her husband. Kartikeya accepted Devasena as his wife. This is the reason why he is also known as Deva senapati.Karitkeya was leading the deities' army, mounted on an elephant. The army had all the deities in its rank-Indra, Varun, Vayu, Kuber, Dharma Raj, etc.Both the rival armies met at an island situated between Ganga and Yamuna. Tarakasur had come with a large army, which boasted of many brave and mighty warriors.

The battle commenced and the first phase was dominated by the demons. The deities could not stand up to the might of demons. Even Indra was severely wounded when Tarakasur attacked him with his deadly weapon- 'Shakti'. On seeing the level of destruction caused in the deities' army, King Muchkunda, who was on the side of the deities' attacked Tarakasur. In the ensuing battle Muchkunda got injured and fell down on the ground. He got up furiously and tried to kill Tarakasur with his Brahmashtra. Sage Narad told him that Brahmashtra would be of no use as Tarakasur had been blessed with invincibility against mortals. Narad said–'Only Kartikeya is capable of killing Tarakasur. So, you all need to have patience till Kartikeya accomplishes his mission.'

Meanwhile Veerabhadra was fighting a dual bought against Tarakasur. He had already caused indescribable losses to the demons. While the fight was going on, Tarakasur realized that it was not easy to defeat him. So, he decided to use his illusionary powers, which helped him in acquiring ten thousand hands. The deities ran away from the battle field, when they saw ferocious Tarakasur approaching them.Lord Vishnu instructed Kartikeya to kill Tarakasur before it was too late. Kartikeya chased Tarakasur with his deadly weapon- Shakti in his hand. A fierce fight took place between both of them. Kartikeya attacked Tarakasur with his Shakti. Tarakasur retaliated by hitting him with his own Shakti. The assault was so severe that Karikeya lost his consciousness for few moments.

When Kartikeya regained his consciousness, he got up quickly to fight against Tarakasur. Once again a fierce battle commenced. Kartikeya remembered his parents in reverence and released his Shakti in the direction of Tarakasur.Tarakasur died instantly. The deities were delighted at the death of their tormentor.

4.1.11 Virtues of Observing a Fast on Shiva-Ratri

Sage Lomesh eulogizes the virtues of Shivaratri in the following words–'The fourteenth day of the dark half of a month is dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva and is famously known as 'Shivaratri'. It destroys all the sins committed by a man.Sage Lomesh then narrated a tale, which emphasized the greatness of Shivaratri–

Once upon a time a brahmin widow developed an illicit relationship with a 'Chandal' (a low caste man). Later on she gave birth to a son who was named Dussah. Her son had all the bad qualities one can think of– a gambler, a drunker, a thief, a murderer, etc.

One day, Dussah went to a Shiva temple with the intention of committing robbery. It was the festive night of Shivaratri and people had thronged the temple in a large number. So, he did not get an opportunity to steal temple property. He remained awakened for the whole night waiting for an opportune moment but his wishes remained unfulfilled. He spent his time listening to the divine tales of Lord Shiva that was being narrated by the temple priest. Though he was a sinner yet he took his next birth in a royal family on account of his two virtuous deeds–he had remained awakened for the whole night of Shivaratri and he had listened to the tales of Shiva. In his next birth, he was born to a king named Chitrangad and he himself was named Vichitraveerya.Vichitraveerya was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He ultimately united with lord Shiva and manifested as Veerabhadra at the time when Lord Shiva had shaken his head violently after hearing the sad news of Sati's demise.There are numerous instances of people attaining salvation by observing a fast on Shivaratri. The names of some great devotees to do so are King Bharat, Mandhata, Dhundhumar, Harishchandra etc.

4.1.12 Kartikeya's Sorrow

While the deities hailed the glory of Kartikeya for having killed Tarakasur, Kartikeya himself was saddened by his act. He told the deities–'I regret for having killed Tarakasur because he was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Is there any way to atone for my sin?'

Lord Vishnu consoled him—'Killing a wicked person, who nourishes himself on the blood of innocent people, is not a sinful deed. But, still, if you feel guilty then there is no better way to atone for your sin than worshipping Lord Shiva. Install Shivalingas and worship them with deep devotion.'Kartikeya instructed Vishnukarma to make three divine Shivalingas. Later on Kartikeya installed these Shivalingas at three different places and worshipped them with appropriate rituals. In course of time these three holy places came to be known as Pratigyeshwar, Kapaleshwar and Kumareshwar. Kartikeya, while worshipping at Kapaleshwar sprinkled holy water on the Shivalinga and prayed so that Tarakasur's soul rested in peace. He also offered sesame seeds to lord Kapaleshwar and prayed –

'May my offerings made in the form of sesame seeds reach Tarak–the descendant of Sage Kashyap.'

This way, Kartikeya was absolved of his sins.

4.1.13 Killing of Pralamb

A demon named Pralamb had escaped unharmed in the battle fought between the deities and demons. As the deities were busy installing Shivalingas at different places, Pralamb started to torment their families in their absence. The deities got this information from Kumud who appeared at the time when the deities were digging up a reservoir near 'Siddheshwar' temple.All the deities requested Kartikeya to do something. Kartikeya released his fiery weapon, Shakti in the direction of Pralamb. Shakti pierced the heart of earth and went right up to Patal loka where Pralamb lived with the surviving demons. All the demons were killed within few moments.

A long tunnel had been created as the impact of Shakti's penetration of the earth. This tunnel was later on filled up with the water of Patal Ganga and became famous as 'Siddha-koopa.'

4.1.14 Kaalbhiti's Austere Penance

There is an amazing tale related with the birth of Kaalbhiti. During ancient times there lived a sonless brahmin named Manti in Kashi. He did an austere penance to get a son. At last, lord Shiva became pleased by his devotion and appeared. Lord Shiva said–'You will be blessed with an enlightened son who would liberate your whole clan.'

In course of time Manti's wife became pregnant but amazingly did not deliver a baby even after a long time. Four years passed like this but Manti's wife did not deliver the child. Manti was perplexed by this unusual event so he asked the baby, who was still in his mother's womb as to why he was hesitant to come out.The child replied that he feared 'Kaal' and this was the reason why he was not taking birth. The child said–'If you can assure me of protection from 'Kaal' then I shall certainly take birth.' How could have Manti given such an assurance. So he took refuge in Lord Shiva.Lord Shiva ordered four of his ganas to go and convince the baby. The names of these five ganas were Dharma, Gyan, Vairagya Aishwarya and Adharma. They assured the baby by saying–'Get rid of your fear. We assure you that each four of us (Dharma, Gyan, Vairagya and Aishwarya) will never abandon you."

The fifth gana named Adharma on the contrary promised not to caste his evil Shadow on the baby. These assurances were enough for the baby to come out from the womb. But, even after taking birth the child was trembling and wailing in fear.The ganas said–Manti! Your child is still fearful of the Kaal. He is trembling and crying inspite of the best of our efforts to drive away is fears. So he will become famous as Kaalbhiti (one who is fearful of Kaal).

Kaalbhiti grew up to be a virtuous person. He used to engage himself in various kinds of austerities. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva.One day, as Kaalbhiti was meditating under a 'bael' tree (wood apple), he went into his trance. The joy experienced during trance period was something, which he had never

experienced before. He decided to regularly meditate under that tree. He did penance for one hundred years standing on his toe.Lord Shiva became pleased by his devotion and appeared in the guise of a human being. Lord Shiva said–'O Great soul Please discontinue with your penance. I have brought some water for you! Please quench your thirst!'

But Kaalbhiti refused to take water from an unknown person. He requested Lord Shiva to reveal his identity. Kaalbhiti also inquired Lord Shiva about his religion and conduct. Lord Shiva told him that he was beyond any religion or conduct.When Kaalbhiti refused to have water, Lord Shiva dug up a large pit and emptied the pot into it. After that he disappeared.Kaalbheeti stood fixed at that place, being stunned by the disappearance of Lord Shiva. Suddenly, an effulgent Shivalinga appeared under that bael (wood apple) tree. Kaalbheeti worshipped that shiva-linga which was radiating light in all directions.Now, lord Shiva appeared and blessed Kaalbheeti to become free from the fear of Kaal(Death). From that day onwards the Shivalinga situated there became famous as Mahakaal. Before disappearing once again, Lord Shiva instructed Kaalbheeti to preach Sage Karandham who was expected to visit him shortly. Kaalbheeti himself became renowned as Mahakaal because he had been successful in conquering death.

4.1.15 Karandham’s Queries

As predicted by Lord Shiva, king Karandham arrived at the place where Mahakaal (Kaalbheeti) was staying. First of all he worshipped Lord Mahakaal and subsequently went to meet sage Mahakaal (previously Kaalbheeti).King Karandham had numerous doubts regarding the rituals of Shraddh so he asked Mahakaal–'How does the rituals related to 'tarpan' satisfy the dead ancestors?' Mahakaal replied–The souls of dead ancestors are capable of accepting whatever is offered to them. Time and distance does not matter to them. They accept only the essence of whatever is offered to them and not the gross materials as such.Karandham posed his second query–'I think a soul, after it has abandoned the mortal body is bound by its own karma. Then, how, can the dead ancestors be expected of giving us blessings and changing our fortunes.' Mahakaal replied—Not all Pitras (dead ancestors) are bound by their karma. Pitras belonging to different classes like deities, 'asuras' and 'yaksha' are unembodied and formless (amurta). Similarly, the dead ancestors of all the four castes are called 'murta Pitras' (with form). These seven types of Pitras are considered to be eternal and powerful. They also transcend the law of Karma. A total number of 31 ganas are subordinate to them. The rituals of Shraddh are performed for the pacification of these seven eternal Pitras. These seven Pitras are the ones who shower blessings on the performers of Shraddh rituals.'Karandham's next question was–'Some people are of the view that one can attain salvation only by taking refuge in Lord Vishnu. While some think that only Lord Brahma is capable of giving salvation. There are many people who consider Lord Shiva as the supreme liberator. What do you have to say on this?' Mahakaal replied–'God is one. The three deities you have named even they eulogize each other. It is nothing but foolishness to grade them as superior,

average or inferior. The thing, which matters most in the path of salvation, is individual's unflinching faith and devotion. Any deity in whom he has total devotion is capable of giving salvation.Karandham then requested Mahakaal to describe the appropriate rituals related with the worship of Lord Shiva. Mahakaal replied—A devotee who puts on 'tripund' mark on his forehead, chest and both the shoulders while worshipping Lord Shiva is blessed to see the divine appearance of Lord Shiva. He should enter the temple premise with a pure heart. After entering the temple he should purify the Shiva linga by removing all the unnecessary articles which may be lying there. He should then fill up four 'Garuas' (drinking pot with a curved spout) with water. Articles like milk, curd clarified butter, honey and Sugarcane juice are kept to the left side of Shiva linga.The devotee should then come out of the temple and worship the 'dwarpalas'. After that, deities like Kuldevta, Nandi, Mahakaal Dhata and Vidhata are worshipped.

Once again he should enter the temple and sit in front of the Shivalinga and meditate on Lord Shiva. While performing 'ardhya' he should make offerings of articles like water, akshat, Kusha grass, sandalwood, flowers, mustard seeds, milk, curd and honey.Having offered ardhya, a devotee should perform the ritual of ablution with water, milk, curd, honey, clarified butter, and sugarcane juice in the given order.

While performing this ritual the devotee should also offer dhupa (incense) and chant

'OM HOOM VISHVAMURTAYE NAMAH'.

Some other deities whom a devotee must worship along with the worship of Lord Shiva are Ishan, Tatpurush, Sadryojat etc. A devotee must also not forget to worship Shiva's trident. While doing this he should chant

TRISHUL DHANUH KHADGA KAPAL KUTHAREBHYO NAMAH.

A devotee should conclude his worship by begging for Lord Shiva's forgiveness for any mistake that he might have committed while performing the rituals.

4.1.16 Arunachal Shiva Linga

Once, Sutji had gone to Naimisharanya. All the sages residing there asked him about the manifestation of Arunachal Shivalinga.Sutji recounted a tale when Sage Sanak had posed the same query to Lord Brahma – 'Lord Brahma had told Sanak-Son, once Lord Vishnu and I witnessed an effulgent Pillar. It had manifested from nowhere and was limitless in size. It's radiance put the whole world ablaze. Both of us worshipped that marvelous pillar by chanting vedic mantras.'Actually, that effulgent pillar was a Shivalinga. Lord Shiva manifested from it after being pleased by our devotion. We requested him to minimize his size and establish himself in the form of Arunachal Shivalinga.'

'Lord Shiva agreed to minimize his size as well as his effulgence by establishing himself in the form of 'Arunachaleshwar'.The holy place of Arunachaleshwar

remains untouched while the whole world gets submerged in water at the time of deluge.

4.1.17 Lord Shiva – The Sovereign Creator

The sages then asked Sutji how Lord Shiva had created the universe.

Sutji replied—Lord Shiva commenced creation by his own will. Vishnu manifested from the left side of his body while Brahma from the right side. He then attributed the qualities of 'Rajas' and 'Satva' to Brahma and Vishnu respectively. From then onwards Lord Brahma took the responsibility of further creation and Lord Vishnu became the preserver of the world.Later on Lord Brahma created his ten Manasputra (Marichi etc,) by his will and Daksha Prajapati from his right thumb. He also created the brahmins from his mouth, Kshatriyas from both his arms, Vaishyas from both his thighs and Shudras from both his feet respectively.Both, the deities and demons came from the lineage of Sage Kashyap, who himself was Marichi's son. Not only that Kashyap also fathered different species like Marut, Nag, Yaksha, Gandharva and apsaras.

Similarly, Lord Brahma had also created Manu who is believed to be the person from whom human race originated. All the sages as well as the Kshatriyas are the descendants of Sage Atri. Yakshas originated from Pulastya whereas Rakshashas were the descendants of Pulah. Agni as well as Sages like Chyavan was the descendant of Bhrigu. Many famous sages came from the lineage of Vasishth. These are the names of few prominent sages, whose descendants have populated the earth.Thus, Lord Shiva is the Sovereign creator because he created Brahma–the creator.

4.1.18 Execution of Shumbh, Nishumbh and Mahishasur

The demons named Shumbh and Nishumbh had received boons from Brahma according to which no deity, demon or Man could kill him. Shumbh and Nishumbh became excessively arrogant and started tormenting the deities. All the deities including Lord Vishnu went to Lord Shiva and requested for his help. Lord Shiva assured them that both the demons would be killed at the opportune time. The deities were satisfied and returned back to their respective abodes.Parvati was of dark complexion. She thought that Shiva would be more affectionate towards her if she somehow discarded her dark skin. She eventually discarded her dark skin at a place and it instantly got transformed into 'Kali Kaushiki'. She then did an austere penance at Vindhyachal mountain. At that time, Shumbh and Nishumbh lived there. When both the demons saw goddess Kali Kaushiki her divine beauty infatuated them. But Goddess Kali Kaushiki ultimately killed both of them.

Having accomplished her mission, Kali Kaushiki did a tremendous penance at 'Gauri-peak' and regained her fair complexion. In course of time she became the mother of Ganesh and Kartikeya. Once, goddess Parvati went to Arunachal mountain where Sage Gautam was doing penance. She was so enchanted by the scenery over there that she decided to do penance. She instructed goddess

Durga to stand guard till she accomplished her penance. She also ordered the two goddesses Subhaga and Dhundhukumari to keep a watch in all directions.

Mahishasur–the demon sent a female messenger to convince Parvati into marrying him. The female messenger disguised herself as a female hermit and tried to impress all the three goddess who were keeping surveillance by praising the glory of Mahishasur–

'O beautiful ladies! Why is your mistress living in such a secluded place? She is worthy of living in a royal palace. There is nobody among the deities who is fit enough to marry her. But, Mahishasur–the lord of all the three worlds is certainly fit to become her husband.'But all the three goddesses drove the female messenger away. Ultimately, Mahishasur came accompanied by a large army to forcibly abduct goddess Parvati. The commotion caused by the demons disturbed Parvati's meditation. She instructed Durga to kill all the demons.Goddess Durga transformed her appearance. Now she looked ferocious in her new appearance. She was well equipped with all sort of lethal weapons and was mounted on a lion. She thundered loudly and challenged Mahishasur. Countless 'yoginis' manifested from her body. These yoginis attacked Mahishasur's army and killed many demons. The whole battlefield was splashed with blood.

Goddess Chamunda (Durga) severed the heads of 'Chand' and 'Mund' with her chakra. Mahishasur was enraged and he attacked goddess Durga. Some other demons like Prachanda, Chamar, Mahamauli, Mahahanu, Ugravaktra, Vikataksha and Dahan also came forward to help him but each one of them was killed by goddess Durga.Now, Mahishasur's anger crossed all limits and he menacingly ran towards goddess Durga. A severe battle was fought between both of them. When Mahishasur realized that the goddess was dominating the battle, he started changing his guises frequently. He tried to dodge goddess Durga by transforming his appearance into that of a boar. But, goddess Durga kept on chasing him. Then, Mahishasur became a lion. This way he kept on changing his appearances frequently to avoid getting killed by goddess Durga. Once he transformed himself into a buffalo but goddess Durga attacked him.

This way, Mahishasur was forced to change his appearance frequently on account of relentless attack by goddess Durga. Ultimately Durga killed him. Goddess Durga picked up his severed head and danced in joy. The deities were relieved at the death of Mahishasur.

4.1.19 Parvati Receives Arunchaleshwar's Grace

Goddess Durga then went to the place where goddess Parvati was still doing penance. She held Mahishasur's head in one hand and a sword in the other.Goddess Parvati said—'O Vindhyavasini! You have accomplished an impossible act. If it were not for you I would not have been able to accomplish my own penance. Now, you should get rid of this skull and create a holy spring bathing in which would destroy your sin acquired by killing Mahishasur.'

Goddess Durga hit ferociously at a huge rock breaking it into pieces. A large pit was created which was soon filled up with underground water. She then took her bath in it by chanting **NAMAH SHONADRINATHAY**.

In the meantime, an amazing incident took place. While goddess Durga was taking her bath with Mahishasur's skull in her hand, a Shivalinga, which was struck in Mahishasur's throat fell down. This Shivalinga later on became famous as 'Papanashan Shivalinga'. She then released the skull and came out from the pond.Arunachaleshwar (Lord Shiva) became pleased by Parvati's devotion and appeared before her. Lord Arunachaleshwar then made Parvati to sit by his left side. The next moment Parvati's identity mingled with that of Lord Arunachaleshwar. The place where this incident took place, there is situated a grand temple of goddess Apitastani and Lord Arunachaleshwar.

4.2 Vaishnav Khand

This Chapter contains 2 sections each with 14 and 12 sub-sections respectively. In order to simplify the presentation of information here, the 2 sections will be combined into one with all 26 sub-sections listed as sections.

4.2.1 Lord Varah satisfies Prithvi's Curiosity

Sutji then narrated the tale of Lord Varah to the sages, which he had heard from Sage Vyas—

Once, while Narad was wandering about, he reached Meru mountain where he saw the abode of Lord Brahma. He also saw a giant sized entity, just next to Brahma's abode. The person possessed four arms and his face resembled a boar. The person held a conch and a chakra in his two hands–The remaining two hands were in the postures of giving blessings. Narad was very surprised to see that divine person being surrounded by Sages like Vashishth, Atri, Markandeya and Bhrigu. After paying his eulogy to him, he stood in a corner.In the meantime, Prithvi (earth) arrived there with her two companions–Ila and Pingla. She was curious to know about the identities of various mountains, which Lord Varah had established on her.Lord Varah told Prithvi about the prominent mountains—Mountains like Sumeru, Himavan, Mandarachal, Vindhyachal, Pariyatrak, Mahendra, Malay, Sinhachal and Gandhamadan are situated to the north of Himalaya.

The mountain ranges situated to the south of Himalaya are Arunachal, Hasti, Gridhachal and Ghatikachal. Sages believe that in Satyayuga Lord Vishnu had his abode at Anjan Mountain, while in tretayuga, dwaparyuga and Kaliyuga he has his abode at Narayangiri, Sinhachal and Shrivenketachal respectively.Lord Varah and Prithvi flew away towards Venkatachalgiri mounted on Garuda.

4.2.2 Lord Varah Mantra

On their way, Prithvi requested Lord Varah to reveal the sacred mantra, chanting of which makes him pleased.

Lord Varah said–'The secret mantra that pleases me to no limits is —OM NAHAM SHRIVARAHAY DHARANYU UDDHARNAY SWAHA. This mantra is capable of liberating a man and also brings all sort of worldly accomplishments to him.In the first Krita yuga, a Manu named Dharma had realized me by continuously chanting this mantra. Even Indra regained the control of heaven by chanting it. Anant–the lord of all serpents, chanted Varaha mantra and as a result became capable of holding the earth on it's hood.'

4.2.3 Manifestation of Padmavati

Lord Varah then narrated the tale of Padmavati's manifestation to Prithvi. He also revealed to her that Padmavati was the reincarnation of Vedavati and had manifested so that she could become his (Vishnu) consort.Lord Varah said— Once upon a time there lived an emperor named Akash. One day he ordered his men to get the land situated at the bank of Arani ploughed so that a grand yagya could be organized there.As the land was being cultivated, the plough suddenly struck against something. People ploughing the field dug up that place and were surprised to find an infant girl, crying loudly.The news of girls' manifestation spread like a wild fire. The emperor became extremely happy since he had no progeny. He brought up that child as his own daughter. This way the baby girl was brought up like a princess. She was named Padmavati. Padmavati proved very lucky for the emperor, as the emperor, who was still sonless till then was blessed with a son. This male child was named Vasudan.

One day, Narad visited the palace and met both the children. He was impressed by Vasudan's intelligence but Padmavati appeared to be shy and absorbed in her own thoughts. Narad lovingly called her and instructed her to spread her left palm. Narad was amazed to find signs, which predicted Padmavati's marriage to Lord Vishnu. Everybody living in the palace became happy after getting this news. Narad then went away.

4.2.4 Padmavati becomes Lord Hari's Consort

Continuing with the tale, Lord Varah said– One day, while Padmavati and her companions were playing in the garden, they saw an equestrian approaching them. He held a bow and arrows in both his hands.The stranger asked all the girls whether they had seen a wolf. Apparently the stranger was on his hunting spree. Padmavati angrily reminded the stranger that hunting was strictly prohibited in that area and hence he should go back home.The stranger was stunned by Padmavati's beauty and said–'I am Ananta from Venketachal mountain. People also call me Veerpati. Can I have this beautiful lady as my wife.'

Padmavati's companions angrily rebuffed Anant who then galloped back on his horse. These unfortunate girls were unable to recognize Lord Vishnu who had come disguised as Anant.After reaching his palace, Anant found it very difficult to concentrate on his work. His mind was occupied by the thoughts of Padmavati. One day, while he was sitting in a thoughtful mood, Vakulmalika (a maid servant) arrived there and requested him to come down for lunch. But, Sri Hari (Anant) was lost in the thoughts of Padmavati. On being asked by Vakulmalika, Sri Hari narrated the following tale to her —

In treta yuga, when I had incarnated as Ram, Ravan had deceit- fully abducted my consort–Sita. But fortunately she was not Sita but Agni's consort Swaha. Before this incident could occur,Agni had already taken Sita to Patalloka and kept his own wife 'Swaha' in her place. Indra's act had special purpose behind it–to avenge Swaha's death,who was Vedavati in her previous birth and who had committed suicide after being touched by the same demon.Actually, Agni's consort 'Swaha' was 'Vedavati' in her previous birth. So, in reality Ravan had abducted Vedavati instead of Sita. Later on, I thanked Agni and promised him that I would make Vedavati my consort in Kaliyuga. The same vedavati has taken birth as Padmavati. You must go and convince Padmavati to become my consort.Vakulmalika went to Narayanpur and informed the king about Sri Hari's desire. Emperor Akash was extremely delighted at the prospect of having Sri Hari as his son-in-law. An auspicious day was chosen for the marriage and thus, Lord Sri Hari got Padmavati as his consort.

4.2.5 King Parikshit

Once, Sutji narrated the tale of king Pareekshit to all the assembled sages—

Pareekshit ruled over Hastinapur. One day he went into a forest on a hunting spree. He saw a deer and managed to injure it with his arrow. But the injured deer disappeared from his sight. Pareekshit chased the injured deer in the direction it had disappeared.He reached a place where sage Shamik was engrossed in his meditation. Pareekshit enquired sage Shamik if he had seen that injured deer. Bur sage Shamik being in deep meditation did not respond to Pareekshit query. This made Pareekshit extremely angry and he wrapped a dead snake around Shamik's neck as a punishment for not having answered his question. But, it made no difference to Sage Shamik and he continued with his meditation. Pareekshit went back fuming in anger.

Shringi was the son of Sage Shamik. When he saw a dead snake coiling around his father's neck, he cursed–'Whoever has tried to insult my father will not live to see the seventh day because a takshak nag would bite him to death.'

When sage Shamik learnt about his son's curse, he reproached his son and sent a disciple named 'Daurmukh' to inform Pareekshit so that he (Pareekshit) could take some preventive measures. Daurmukh went and narrated the whole incident to king Pareekshit.Pareekshit became very scarred and he started living on a canopy that had been constructed in the middle of river Ganges on

his instructions. Now he felt secured and safe.Meanwhile a poor brahmin named Kashyap came to know about the curse that poor Pareekshit had received. He knew how to cure a person bitten by snake. So he thought that it was an excellent opportunity for him to receive monetary awards from the king. So, he proceeded towards the place where Pareekshit was staying.

On his way, Kashyap met a brahmin who in reality was takshak in disguise. Takshak was on his way to kill Pareekshit. He asked Kashyap about the reason he was going to meet Pareekshit. Kashyap revealed to Takshak that he could neutralize the influence of poison in any person bitten by a snake. Takshak wanted to examine the authenticity of Kashyap's statement, so he inserted his poisonous fangs into the trunk of a huge tree. A man was sitting on the branches of that tree. The tree as well as the man was charred to death within no time.

Kashyap, really brought the tree and that man back to life. Takshak was stunned by this unbelievable act. He asked Kashyap how much he expected as reward from the king. Kashyap revealed the amount, which he expected from Pareekshit in lieu of giving him a fresh lease of life. Takshak gave lot of wealth to him as a bribe and Kashyap went back home satisfied.Takshak then summoned all his companions and instructed them to go to the place where Pareekshit lived, disguising themselves as hermits. All the serpents went to meet Pareekshit impersonating as hermits and offered fruits to him. According to his plan,Takshak had hidden himself within a plum fruit. He bit Pareekshit as soon as he got a chance. Pareekshit died instantly.Janmejaya was crowned as the next king. Meanwhile, people started criticizing the treacherous conduct of Kashyap, which had resulted in the death of king Pareekshit. He decided to make a pilgrimage to Venketachaleshwar so that he became liberated from his sin.

4.2.6 Krshna Teertha

Sutji narrated a tale to all the assembled sages–During ancient times, a brahmin named Ramkrishna did an austere penance at Venketachal mountain. He remained immobile during the entire course of his penance resulting into the development of mole hills all over his body.Indra was scarred by Ramkrishna's penance and caused a heavy downpour for a week. All the mole hills were washed away from Ramkrishna's body.Lord Srinivas became pleased and appeared before him. He blessed Ramkrishna by saying–'This holy place, where you have performed a great penance will be named after you as Krishna teerth. Anybody who makes a pilgrimage to this place will be liberated from all the sins.'

Eulogizing Lord Venketashwar, Sutji says—

'A man, who has the good fortune of seeing the divine appearance of Lord Srinivas even for a moment, attains salvation.

4.2.7 Some Other Places of Pilgrimage on Venketachal Mountain

All the sages then requested Sutji to tell about some other places of pilgrimage situated on Venketachal mountain.

Sutji replied—There are about one hundred and eight holy places situated on Venketachal mountain. Among all these holy places, six are considered to be capable of bestowing salvation—Swami pushkarini, Akash ganga, Papvinashan, Panduteerth, Kumar dharika teerth and Tumbu teerth.

4.2.8 Anjana's Penance at Akash-Ganga Teertha

Describing how Vayudeva had once assured Anjana that he would take birth as her son, Sutji told the sages—Anjana, being issue less even after a long married life, decided to do penance in order to beget a son. Sage Matang advised her to go to Akashganga teerth where her wishes would get fulfilled. Sage Matang also described the geographical location– 'At a distance of ten yojans towards south is situated Dhanachal mountain, which is believed to be the abode of Lord Nrisimha. Brahma teerth lies in its vicinity. At a distance of ten yojans south of Brahma teerth, flows river 'Suvarnamukhari'. Venkentachal mountain is situated to the north of this river and the holiest place called Swamipushkarni is situated among its numerous peaks. You should visit that place and take a holy dip in its water. After that you should seek the blessings of Lord Varahaswami and Lord Venketeshwar. You should then go towards north of Swami teerth and you would reach Akashganga.'

Acting as per Matang's instructions, Anjana went to Akashganga teerth and did her penance. Finally Lord Vayudeva appeared before her and promised to incarnate as Hanuman.

4.2.9 Lord Vishnu Advises Lord Brahma to go to Purushottam Kshetra

The Sages asked—'O revered sage! We would like to know more about Purushottam Kshetra, where there is a majestic wooden idol of Lord Vishnu.'

Sage Jaimini replied–The sacrosanct place of Purushottam Kshetra is graced by the presence of Lord Jagannath. During ancient times, Lord Varah had rescued Prithvi from the clutches of Hiranyaksha–the mighty demon who had abducted her to Rasatala. After Prithvi had been established in its original position, Lord Brahma commenced his creations. Lord Brahma wondered about the means by which human beings could get liberated from three major types of sorrow—Adhyatmic (spiritual), Adhidaivik (deities wrath), Adhibhantik (related with this world). He sought the help of Lord Vishnu who eulogized the greatness of Purushottam Kshetra and advised him to go there. Lord Vishnu said–'Purushottam Kshetra is situated at the sea-shore, to the south of river Mahanadi. This sacroscant place of mine does not get affected by deluge. I dwell at this holiest place as 'Lord Purushottam'. There is a holy pond called Rohin in the vicinity. Anybody who takes a holy dip in that pond gets absolved of all his sins. O Brahma! You must pay a visit to Purushottam kshetra where

spending a day bestows virtues greater than all the austerities combined together.'
This way,Lord Brahma went to Purushottam kshetra as per the instructions of Lord Vishnu.

4.2.10 Markandeya Eulogizes Vishnu

Lord Brahma soon after reaching Purushottam kshetra sat down and started meditating. He was so engrossed in his meditation that he remained in that state for a very long time. This resulted into total chaos as Yamaraj found that his power of causing death had no effect on people living in Purushottam kshetra. Worried as he was, Yamaraj rushed towards Neelachal mountain and sought Lord Vishnu's intervention in the matter.

Lord Vishnu smiled and signaled goddess Laxmi to say something. Goddess Laxmi said–'O Suryanandan! Anybody residing at this holy place is freed from the vicious cycles of birth and death after becoming absolved of all his sins. This is the reason why you are experiencing this unusual problem. The whole world except this holy place will come into your jurisdiction.'

Yamaraj was amazed by this revelation so he asked Laxmi–'I would like to know why such a privilege is being given to this place?'

Laxmi replied–'O Ravinandan! At the time of deluge when the whole world was submerged in the water sage Markandeya was struggling to find a secure place for his survival. Although he was blessed with an unusually long life of seven kalpas but still he needed a place to live in. He started swimming and finally managed to reach Purushottam kshetra, which had remained unscathed by the turbulence of the deluge. There he saw a divine tree called 'Akshay Vat'. Markandeya continued to swim along the coast wondering how that place had managed to remain unaffected by deluge when the whole world had been submerged. Suddenly he heard a voice, which appeared to be coming from the direction of the Akshay Vat–'O Markandeya! Don't worry! Take my refuge and you shall be protected.'

Markandeya was very surprised and looked all around. He kept on swimming and saw Lord Vishnu, who was engrossed in his yoga nidra in ksheer sagar. I (Laxmi) was also present there. Markandeya eulogized Vishnu in the following way–'Salutations to the supreme lord- the source of all creations! O Jagannath! Protect me from getting drowned.'

Lord Vishnu opened his eyes and found Markandeya gasping for breath. On realizing the gravity of the situation he said–'Raise your head and look at the top of this Kalpa Vat. You would find an infant sleeping on a leaf of the Kalpa Vat. The infant is none other than Kaal himself. You should enter inside his (Kaal's) body through his opened mouth and live peacefully as there is no other place for you to live in.'

Markandeya entered into Kaal's body as per the instructions given by Lord Vishnu and was amazed by the expanse of his belly, which appeared like a bottomless pit. He also saw all the fourteen Bhuvans existing within Kaal's belly including all the creatures-deities, sages, siddhas, gandharvas, etc. Markandeya wandered all over the place and after getting tired came out through Kaal's opened mouth. He found Lord Vishnu was still present there accompanied by his consort-Laxmi. Markandeya made salutations to both of them and narrated his experiences he had inside Kaal's belly.Lord Vishnu blessed him and made a revelation–' The place you had visited few moments ago is beyond the limits of creation or deluge. The name of this holiest place is Purushottam kshetra and it is my permanent abode for I do not leave it even for a moment.'Markandeya was very impressed and requested Lord Vishnu to allow him to live there. Lord Vishnu replied–' O Brahmarishi! I shall remain at Purushottam-kshetra till the end of this kalpa. I shall also create a sacrosanct place, which would enable you to become immortal.'

Sage Markandeya then dug up a reservoir with the help of Vishnu's chakra. He did an austere penance to please lord Maheshwar as the result of which he was indeed blessed with immortality. In course of time, this reservoir became famous as 'Markandeya kund'.

4.2.11 Holy Places in the vicinity of Purushottam-Kshetra

Dwelling in length upon the majesty of Purushottam kshetra, goddess Laxmi said–Purushottam kshetra resembles a conch in shape and is graced by the presence of lord Shiva. Towards its north is situated a temple of lord Neelkanth. A famous shiva linga named Kapal mochan is also situated in the vicinity. One who makes a pilgrimage to Kapalmochan becomes liberated from gravest of sins. A temple of goddess Vimla devi is also situated nearby.

Purushottam kshetra is considered to be supreme among all the places of pilgrimage and for this very reason it is aptly named 'Teerth Raj'. A divine pond called Rohin kund is also situated nearby. Anybody who takes a holy dip there is freed from the vicious cycles of birth and death. It is believed that the increased level of water at the time of deluge ultimately recedes and disappears into this pond.

Goddess Laxmi said–' O Dhanraj! This holy place is beyond your jurisdiction because people living there never experience death. It is well protected by eight goddesses from all the eight directions. The names of these eight goddesses are Mangla, Lamba, Kaalratri, Marichika, Vimla, Sarvamangla, Ardhashini and Chandrupa. How can lord Rudra be absent when Rudrani has manifested herself in eight forms, so, he has manifested himself in eight different forms as well- Kapalmochan, Kshetrapal, Yameshwar, Markandeyeshwar, Ishan, Bilveshwar, Neelkanth, and Vateshwar.While describing the majesty of Purushottam kshetra, goddess Laxmi revealed to lord Brahma–' In the coming satya yuga there would be a king named Indradyumna and would be famous for his unflinching devotion in lord Vishnu. Being pleased by the king's devotion,

lord Vishnu would ultimately manifest himself from a wooden structure to bless him. Vishwakarma would then carve out four idols (Jagannath, Balbhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan chakra) from the wooden block all of which would be installed by none other than you (Brahma).'

Once, while sage Jaimini was describing the greatness of Purushottam kshetra to the assembled sages, all of them curiously asked him–

' Where is Purushottam kshetra situated ?
Jaimini replied –' Utkal is situated at the eastern coast of Bharatvarsha. At the time of deluge, when everything gets submerged in water Utkal remains unaffected and it is the very place from where the knowledge of the Vedas spread in all directions. The residents of Utkal are not only learned but also very prosperous. There is not a single person in this land who is not a devotee of lord Vishnu. All the people belonging to the four prominent castes (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) diligently follow their respective dharma. This holy place never experiences natural calamities of any kind.'

Sage Jaimini then went on to narrate the tale of king Indradyumna to all the assembled sages –

'In satya yuga there lived a noble and virtuous king named Indradyumna, who ruled over the province of Malva. He was a great devotee of lord Vishnu. One day, while worshipping in a temple, he asked the priest-I have a wish, which still remains unfulfilled. I have a deep desire of seeing lord Jagannath with my mortal eyes. Is there any means with the help of which I can get my wish fulfilled?

The royal priest had no answer to the king's query so he kept quiet.Suddenly, he saw a group of pilgrims coming towards the temple. He thought that perhaps one of them might be having an answer to the king's query. When the pilgrims arrived at the temple, the royal priest posed the same question to them. One of the pilgrims answered–' There is a place called Odhra, where is situated a grand temple of lord Jagannath. This sacrosanct place is also famously known as Purushottam kshetra and is situated at the foothills of the Neelachal mountain. There is a holy pond called Rohin situated nearby. At the eastern bank of this pond is situated a majestic temple of lord Vasudev. The idol of lord Vasudev is made of 'Indraneel' diamond. To the west of this temple lies 'Shabardeep' hermitage, from where starts a path leading to Jagannath temple.'

Having said this, the pilgrim disappeared from everybody's sight. Not only Indradyumna but all the pilgrims were equally amazed by his sudden disappearance. Indradyumna was convinced that lord Jagannath had himself come there in the guise of a pilgrim. Now, his desire of visiting Purushottam kshetra became even more intense. Indradyumna instructed his priest to find out the exact location of Purushottam kshetra by sending somebody over there. Later on, the priest went home and sought the help of Vidyapati-his younger

brother in this regard. Vidyapati readily agreed to help his brother and one fine day he proceeded on his journey with a select group of his trusted friends.

After a long and arduous journey all of them reached 'Ekamravan' forest, situated at the foothills of Neelachal mountain. The thought of being so near their destination made everybody extremely excited. But, despite their best of efforts they could not find Shabardeep ashram. Being tired, all of them decided to take rest for a while and then recommence their efforts to find out the location of Shabardeep hermitage. Finding a huge tree, all of them took rest under the shade of that tree. Suddenly, they heard a heavenly voice, which appeared to be coming from the western direction. They followed the voice and reached Shabardeep ashram in a short time. There they saw a large gathering of devotees. One of the devotees, whose name was Vishvavasu, curiously asked Vidyapati–'It is not easy to reach this place. From where are you coming and where do you intend to go? You must be tired–wait, till I return with some refreshment for all of you.'

Vidyapati was not in a mood to waste his time, as he was aware that Indradyumna was eagerly waiting for him to return. He told Vishvavasu– I have a difficult mission to accomplish so, I am not in a position to waste my time. I am the younger brother of the royal priest of king Indradyumna. The king has vowed not to have a single morsel of food till he makes a pilgrimage to Purushottam kshetra. He has sent me with a specific purpose of finding the exact location of Purushottam kshetra and the easiest route leading to it. So, help me reach the temple of lord Jagannath as soon as possible.'

4.2.12 Vidyapati Eulogizes Lord NeelMadhava

Vishvavasu told Vidyapati–' I have heard this prophesy of Indradyumna's possible arrival at Purushottam kshetra in the near future. Not only that, I have also heard that Indradyumna would become so impressed with Purushottam kshetra that he would settle down there for good after renouncing everything.'

Vishvavasu then requested Vidyapati to follow him and started negotiating the steep heights of Neelachal mountain. Vidyapati followed him through the curvy and arduous paths of the mountain. Having walked for sometime, Vishvavasu pointed towards a pond and said–This pond is famously known as Rohin kund. The kalpa vat that you see towards the east of this pond is considered to be so sacrosanct that a sinner becomes liberated of all his sins once he comes under its shade. Lord Jagannath's temple is situated between Rohin kund and the kalpa vat. Go ahead and have a darshan of lord Jagannath for whom you have undertaken such an arduous travel.

Vidyapati's joys knew no bounds as he had been waiting for this moment for a long time. First he purified himself by taking a holy dip in Rohin kund and then went inside the temple to worship lord Jagannath. He worshipped lord Jagannath by chanting the sacred pranav mantra.After the worship was over, Vishvavasu requested Vidyapatito visit his place which was nearby. Vidyapati

agreed and accompanied Vishvavasu to his place. Vidyapati was given a royal treat by his host, which made him wonder as to how could Vishvavasu arrange all the luxurious things at such a remote place. He could not control himself and asked Vishvavasu– Even a king would have found it difficult to treat his guest as lavishly like you! I am amazed how you could make arrangements for all these things at a remote and secluded place like this! How do you manage this?

Vishvavasu replied– It is not as difficult as you believe. Since Purushottam kshetra is a sacrosanct place and it is frequently visited by the deities who make divine offerings to lord Jagannath. I collect the residuals of whatever is offered to Jagannath from the temple and bring it home. So, I really don't have to make any special efforts to accumulate divine food stuffs. On account of eating these divine food stuffs, not only we have been blessed by eternal youth but also we are never troubled by old age.Vidyapati was very impressed and requested Vishvavasu to become his friend. He also reminded Vishvavasu that he wanted to return as soon as possible so that the king could go on a pilgrimage to Purushottam kshetra. But, Vishvavasu made a shocking disclosure to Vidyapati and said– King Indradyumna will never be able to have a divine glimpse of lord Jagannath as the lord is soon going to disappear. But, don't disclose this fact to the king otherwise he would get disheartened and abandon his plan of making a pilgrimage to Purushottam kshetra. Finally, when the king in his utter frustration would try to end his life after not being able to have a divine glimpse of Neelmadhav, the most gracious lord will appear in his dream and instruct him to get constructed four wooden idols of Jagannath, Balbhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan chakra.

Having accomplished his mission, Vidyapati proceeded on his return journey and once again he visited Purushottam kshetra, which fell on the way. He picked up a garland, which had been offered to Neelmadhav by some deity.Finally, when he reached Malwa he found king Indradyumna eagerly waiting for him. After presenting the garland to the king, he narrated his experiences he had at Purushottam kshetra–' O king! Lord Jagannath's idol is made of Neelmani diamond and is very ancient. Even the deities have deep regards and undiluted reverence for lord Jagannath and are frequent visitors to Purushottam Kshetra. The garland, which I have given you, was in fact had been offered to Lord Jagannath by the deities- these flowers do not wither and have fragrance lasting for eternity. Purushottam kshetra remains untouched by old age, sorrow or disease and gives salvation to anybody, who goes on a pilgrimage over there.'

4.2.13 Indrayumna Leaves for Purushottam-Kshetra

Indradyumna had been waiting for this moment for a long time- the moment when he would get a chance to go on a pilgrimage to Purushottam kshetra. Revealing his great plan to Vidyapati, he said–' Now, the time has finally come for me to go on a pilgrimage to Purushottam kshetra. I also intend to develop that holy place as a prominent place of pilgrimage. I would shift my subject to

that holy place and perform one hundred Ashwamedha yagyas once I reach there. I also intend to devote rest of my life in the worship of Lord Jagannath.'

While the conversation was going on, the ever wandering sage-Narad, arrived there and informed Indradyumna how pleased were the deities after learning of his holy intention of developing Purushottam kshetra into a major place of pilgrimage. Narad also dwelt on length on the virtues of Jagannath's worship. Indradyumna, thinking that Narad might prove to be of great help during the course of pilgrimage because of his vast travelling experience, requested him to accompany him to Purushottam kshetra. Narad readily agreed to accompany the king and said–' O king! I shall reveal to you the importance of all the holy places that we come across in the course of our pilgrimage.'

Finally, king Indradyumna left for Purushottam kshetra followed by a large procession, that consisted of his subject, all the ministers and army officers. The entourage touched the bank of river Mahanadi by evening. Deciding to take rest and spend the night there, king Indradyumna first took his bath and then worshipped Lord Jagannath. After the king had taken his bath, all the rest of the people also took their bath and then everybody sat down to have their dinner. After the meal was over, while Indradyumna was busy discussing with his ministers on the future course of action, somebody came with the news that the king of Utkal had arrived. Indradyumna ordered the messenger to bring the esteemed guest with all the honour and respect. The king of Utkal arrived and broke a disturbing news– ' Indradyumna, I am afraid your intention of having a divine glimpse of Lord Jagannath is not going to fructify as lord Neelmadhav has presently concealed himself beneath a huge heap of sand caused by a ferocious sandstorm. The fallout of this inauspicious incident has been extremely adverse on my kingdom– as my people are experiencing acute famine.

Indradyumna was shocked, especially the thought of not getting a chance to have a divine glimpse of lord Neelmadhav made him dejected- he saw all his efforts going in vain. But, Narad consoled him by saying –' Don't worry! Lord Neelmadhav is extremely merciful and he will certainly give you an opportunity to have his divine glimpse.'

4.2.14 Indrayumna Reaches Ekamrachhetra

Continuing with the tale of Indradyumna, sage Jaimini told all the sages–' Next morning, Indradyumna and his entourage crossed Mahanadi on boats and reached Ekamrachhetra where they worshipped lord Purushottam. After that they worshipped on their onwards journey and reached Kotishwar Mahalaya where they worshipped lord Tribhuneshwar with appropriate rituals. Lord Tribhuneshwar appeared after becoming pleased and blessed Indradyumna that his wish of seeing lord Jagannath was soon going to be fulfilled. Lord Tribhuneshwar then instructed Narad–' O great soul! After reaching Purushottam kshetra, help Indradyumna perform one hundred yagyas as per the instructions given by lord Brahma. I along with goddess Durga, dwell at the entrance of conch shaped Purushottam kshetra. Although, presently lord

Jagannath has concealed himself beneath a heap of sand yet very soon he is going to manifest himself. Indradyumna should get constructed a magnificent temple of lord Jagannath at the same place, where once existed his idol and presently which is hidden beneath the heap of sand. Later on, Vishwakarma would then carve out four idols from a single piece of wood, which would subsequently be installed by Lord Brahma himself. Finally, Indradyumna's wish of seeing lord Jagannath would get fulfilled.

Narad assured lord Tribhuneshwar that all his instructions would be followed in letter and spirit. The procession then left for the place indicated by Lord Tribhuneshwar.

4.2.15 Indrayumna Eulogizes Lord NeelMadhava

After reaching the temple of Neelkanth-Mahadev, all of them worshipped Mahadev and Durga. They then visited the temple of lord Nrisimha, situated under a sandalwood tree at the foothills of Neelachal mountain.King Indradyumna was anxiously waiting for the moment he would have a divine glimpse of lord Jagannath. He requested Narad to take him to the place where Jagannath had hidden himself beneath the heap of sand. Narad took him near a Banyan tree and said–' Look at this huge Banyan tree that is two yojans in height and whose trunk is spread in the area of one yojan. To the north of this Banyan tree and to the north of Nrisimha temple lies the place where lord Neelmadhav used to have his dwelling sometime ago but who has presently concealed himself. Now, the time is not very far when you would see lord Jagannath with your mortal eyes.'

Indradyumna bowed in reverence to the place where lord Jagannath was supposed to re-manifest himself in the near future. He eulogized the lord as if he were already present there and this was true as Jagannath's idol was indeed present there albeit hidden beneath heaps of sand. He prayed–' O lord! You are the one in whom every living creature ultimately takes refuge. My only wish is to be able to see your idol, which is presently hidden beneath heaps of sand.'Hardly had Indradyumna finished his prayer when he heard a heavenly voice–'O king! Do not worry! The day is not far when you would see me with your mortal eyes. You just need to follow Narad's instructions and your wish will be fulfilled.

4.2.16 Narad Installs the Idol of NriSimha

Narad told Indradyumna–' Now, we should install an idol of lord Nrisimha near Neelkanth's temple for this is the very place where you will be performing one thousand Ashwamedh Yagyas in the days to come. So, your first priority should be to get constructed a magnificent temple of lord Nrisimha. I plan to stay here for five more days as Vishwakarma will be needing my help in carving out the idol of lord Nrisihma.'

Leaving Narad alone near the Neelkanth temple, Indradyumna went near the sandalwood tree, which was at a little distance from the temple, and was

surprised to find Sughat- Vishwakarma's son waiting for him. He requested Sughat to construct a grand temple with its main entrance facing west. Sughat constructed the temple within four days. On the fifth day, Narad arrived there with an idol of lord Nrisimha, which had been carved out by Vishwakarma. An auspicious day was chosen for installing the idol. After the idol had been installed, every body including king Indradyumna, Narad as well as the people accompanying the procession worshipped Lord Narsimha.

4.2.17 Indrayumna Performs Ashvamedhya Yagyas

Sages, who had been listening to the tale narrated by Jaimini with rapt attention till then asked–' What did Indradyumna next do after the idol of Lord Nrisimha had been installed?'

Sage Jaimini replied–' After the idol of Lord Nrisimha had been installed, Indradyumna began making preparations for Ashwamedha yagya. He sent invitations to all the deities, learned brahmins and sages. When everybody arrived, he made a special request to Indra to remain present at the oblation site till the completion of one thousand Ashwamedha yagyas.Indra assured Indradyumna of his full cooperation and advised him to go ahead with his plan of accomplishing one thousand Ashwamedha yagyas. Finally, Indradyumna performed the first yagya under the supervision of learned priests. This way, he was able to successfully accomplish nine hundred and ninety nine yagyas without any problem. Finally, when the last Ashwamedha yagya was being performed, Indradyumna had a divine glimpse of Lord Vishnu while he was engrossed in his meditation. Indradyumna narrated his experience to Narad to which he got a reply that it was a good omen, which proved that the king was going to see Lord Jagannath with his mortal eyes.

4.2.18 Jaganath Idol is Carved Out

After the rituals of final yagya ended, Narad advised Indradyumna to perform the rituals of 'Purnahuti' to mark the end of Yagya ceremony. Narad then went on to say–' A tree is considered to be the partial incarnation (Ansha avatar) of Lord Vishnu for each of his hair that falls on the earth gets transformed into a tree.' Narad, then pointing towards a tree told Indradyumna– ' The almighty Lord has manifested himself in the form of this tree. Now, you should make preparations to get this tree installed on the great altar inside the temple.'

The tree to which Narad had pointed was unique in the sense that it had only four branches on it. Indradyumna, following the instructions ordered his men to uproot the said tree and then install it on the 'Mahavedi' inside the temple. But, at the same time he was wondering as to who would carve out the four idols of Jagannath, Balbhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan chakra. Suddenly, a heavenly voice was heard–' Lord Vishnu would manifest himself on the sacred altar on his own. An old carpenter, who is standing among you, should be sent inside the temple premise. The main door of the temple should then be shut and nobody should try to enter the temple till the idols are ready. One more thing to be kept in mind is that all of you should keep on beating drums so that nobody hears

the sound emanating from the carving of the idols. Anybody, who hears this sound, is doomed to become deaf. Similarly, anybody who tries to see the act of idols being made shall loose his power of sight.'

Indradyumna made elaborate arrangements as per the instructions given by the heavenly voice. The old carpenter was sent inside and the main door of the temple shut. On the fifteenth day, Lord Jagannath manifested himself along with Balbhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan chakra. Once again heavenly voice was heard which said–' O king! Get all the four idols coloured on the basis of the complexion of the respective deities. The colour of Jagannath's idol should be dark blue similar to that of dark clouds. Similarly, the idol of Balbhadra should be coloured in white just like his fair complexion. The colour of goddess Subhadra's idol should be reddish just like the rising Sun. Sudarshan chakra should be painted deep red. Either the descendants of Vishvavasu or your royal priest are entitled to participate in the consecration ceremony of the idols in future events.'

Indradyumna, once again following the instructions, got the idols coloured in the way specified by the heavenly voice. After that, all the four idols were adorned with beautiful apparels and ornaments. Now, they really looked divine in their new looks. Looking at the divine idols of Jagannath, Indradyumna went into trance. Seeing his condition, Narad advised not to waste time and seek any boon from lord Jagannath because the sole purpose for which Jagannath had manifested himself was to bless him and to fulfill his wish. Indradyumna immediately realized what Narad meant to say. He eulogized lord Jagannath in the following way–' O Jagannath! Help me out from the sorrows of this world. I don't aspire for anything else.'

Subsequently, Narad and the whole entourage, which had come along with king Indradyumna worshipped lord Jagannath, Balbhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan chakra. Lord Jagannath was worshipped amidst the chanting of dwadashakshar mantra while Jagannath was worshipped with Purush sukta. Similarly, Subhadra and Sudarshan chakra were worshipped amidst the chanting of Devisutra and vedic verses respectively. Finally, donations were made to the brahmins and everybody was sent off with respect.

4.2.19 Consecration of the Idols

King Indradyumna was anxious to get performed the rituals of consecration as soon as possible, so he asked Narad–' I am not aware of the proper rituals that are employed in the consecration of an idol. I need your help in this regard.'Narad then made a list of articles required for the consecration of idols and instructed Indradyumna to make arrangements for all those items. He also instructed the king to get constructed a grand palace for Lord Brahma, who was supposed to arrive shortly to perform the consecration ceremony. Narad said–' Get constructed three chariots for all the three deities. The chariot meant for lord Jagannath should have a mast on its top with the figure of Garuda on it. Similarly, Balbhadra's chariot should have a mast with a plough drawn on it

whereas Subhadra's chariot should have a mast with a beautiful lotus drawn on it. The number of horses pulling the chariots of Jagannath, Balbhadra and Subhadra should be Sixteen, fourteen and twelve respectively.'

It did not take much time to construct the three chariots as per the instructions given by Narad. Very soon lord Brahma arrived there, accompanied by all the deities, to perform the consecration of the four idols. On seeing Lord Brahma, Indradyumna's joys knew no bounds and he paid his obeisance to the creator. Lord Brahma said–' See how fortunate you are. All the deities and sages have come here to help you in your cause.'

Lord Brahma then performed the rituals of consecration on the auspicious day of ashtami of the bright half of the hindu month Vaishakh. The day was Thursday and the Nakshatra was Pushya.

4.2.20 Rath Yatra

Dwelling on length about the auspicious days on which Rath Yatra should be taken out, sage Jaimini told the assembled sages–' The combination of 'Teej' falling in the month of Vaishakh (bright half) and Rohini nakshatra, is considered to be extremely auspicious. A king should get constructed three chariots on the above mentioned day. The entire path along which the chariots as well as the procession is supposed to pass should be decorated with beautiful flowers and banners. On the second day of the bright half of the hindu month-Ashadh, all the three deities are worshipped and subsequently installed on their respective chariots, which are then pulled by the devotees. The procession then passes through the major routes of the city so that people can pay their obeisance. After reaching Gundicha Nagar, the procession should stay there for seven days on the bank of Bindu teerth. On the eighth day, all the chariots should begin their return journey. This famous Rath yatra lasts for nine days.

4.2.21 Some Prominent Places of Pilgrimage

Once, sage Shaunak asked Sutji about the means, which enabled human beings to attain salvation in Kaliyuga.
Sutji recounted a tale – Once, Kartikeya had posed the same question to kartikeya. Emphasizing on the importance of pilgrimages, Lord Shiva had told him that in kaliyuga anybody could attain salvation by going on pilgrimage to holy places. Giving names of some prominent holy places and rivers, Lord Shiva had told Kartikeya that some of them were capable of fulfilling any wish of a man, while some gave salvation. The names of some prominent rivers Lord Shiva had given were Ganga, Godavari, Narmada, Tapti, Yamuna, Kshipra, Gautami, Kaushiki, Kaveri, Tamraparni, Chandrabhaga, Sindhu, Gandaki, Sarswati, etc. According to Shiva all these rivers were not only capable of fulfilling any wish of a man but also giving salvation. Naming some prominent holy places, Lord Shiva had told Kartikeya that Ayodhya, Dwarka, Kashi, Mathura, Avanti, Kurukshetra, Ramteerth, Kanchi, Purushottam kshetra,

Pushkar kshetra, Varah kshetra and Badrikashram were capable of liberating a man from the sorrows of this world.'

Lord Shiva had told Kartikeya– 'Anybody who goes on a pilgrimage to Ayodhya becomes absolved of all his sins. Lord Hari dwells at Dwarka and does not abandon it even for a moment. A devotee, who takes a holy dip in river Gomti and then pays obeisance to lord Krishna, attains salvation even if he is ignorant. In the same manner, one who takes a bath in the holy Panchganga at Varanasi, becomes free from the cycles of birth and death. Anybody, who goes on a pilgrimage to Kashi and pays obeisance to lord Vishwanath, is freed from all the bondage of this world. Great importance has been attached to the performance of 'tarpan' at Vishramteerth and anybody who performs the rituals of tarpan with sesame seeds and water, his ancestors are freed from the tortures of the hell. Taking a holy dip in Kotiteerth at Avantipuri, in the hindu month of Vaishakh and worshipping lord Mahakaleshwar too absolves a man of all his sins. Donating gold either at Kurukshetra or Ramteerth, on a solar eclipse day, helps a man in attaining salvation. Going on a pilgrimage to Purushottam kshetra and worshipping lord Jagannath after taking a holy dip in Markandeya sarovar, bestows incomparable virtues. Badrinath, the dwelling place of lord Vishnu, is considered to be the supreme place of pilgrimage and even its remembrance is capable of giving salvation. Virtues attained by the performance of various deeds (tapa, yoga, samadhi), appear to be insignificant as compared to virtues attained by going on a pilgrimage to Badrikashram.

4.2.22 The Majesty of Badri-Kshetra

Kartikeya asked lord Shiva–' How did this sacrosanct place originate? Who is the presiding deity of this place?'
Lord Shiva replied–' Badrikashram is an eternal city and lord Narayan is its presiding deity. A mere sight of Badrikashram is enough to free a man from all the bondage of life. There are numerous other holy places situated in the vicinity, Kedarnath being one of them.'

To emphasize the significance of Badrikashram, lord Shiva narrated the following tale to Kartikeya–' In Satyayuga, lord Vishnu existed in his physical form at Badrikashram for the benediction of human beings. But, in Tretayuga, only sages had the privilege of perceiving him with the help of yoga. At the advent of Dwapar things changed drastically and lord Vishnu just disappeared from Badrikashram. Deities became worried and asked lord Brahma about the reason that made lord Vishnu disappear. Even lord Brahma had no answer to this question. Thinking that lord Vishnu must have gone to Ksheer sagar-his eternal abode, all the deities led by Brahma went there. They eulogized Vishnu, who emerged from the Ksheer sagar. But, none of the deities except lord Brahma could see him. Lord Vishnu told Brahma that the main reason why he disappeared from Badrikashram was the flawed intelligence and arrogance of the deities. Brahma informed the deities whatever Vishnu had told him. All the deities were ashamed of themselves and returned to heaven with long faces. Feeling pity on the deities, I (Shiva) disguised myself as a sanyasi and carried

lord Vishnu's idol from Naradteerth to Badrikashram and installed it over there to uplift the sagging morale of the deities. This is how lord Vishnu once again graced Badrikashram with his presence. Even a grain of 'prasad' had at Badrikashram is enough to liberate a man from all his sins.

4.2.23 The Importance of Hindu Month, Kartik

Once, on being asked by some sages about the significance of the hindu month-Kartik, Sutji narrated the following tale– 'Once, Narad had asked lord Brahma the same question. At that time Lord Brahma had revealed to Narad that 'Kartik' was supreme among all the months just as lord Vishnu is supreme among all the deities and Badrikashram is the crown of all the places of pilgrimage. According to Brahma all these three would have greater significance in Kaliyuga as compared to any other yuga. Kartik is very dear to Lord Vishnu and any virtuous deed done during this month never goes without being rewarded. One important characteristic of this month is that all the deities live in the proximity of human beings for the entire period of the month and accept everything that is offered to them. Penance done in this month or donations made during this month is believed to give Imperishable virtues. There is a special significance of donating food grains during this month. Similarly, worshipping Shaligram during this month also has great significance. Observing austerities during this month or worshipping lord Vishnu with appropriate rituals liberates one's ancestors from the tortures of the hell. Worshipping lord Vishnu with petals of Lotus helps him to become absolved of all the sins committed in his previous many births. Worshipping lord Vishnu with tulsi leaves helps one in getting cured of incurable diseases.

4.2.24 The Importance of Holy Dips in Margashirsh

Continuing with the description of the significance of various months, Sutji said– 'Once, while lord Vishnu was engrossed in his 'yoganidra' at Shwetdweepa, lord Brahma arrived there and requested him to describe the importance of Margashirsh. Lord Vishnu had told him that a devotee aspiring for unification with him, must observes austerities during this month. Describing the proper method of observing austerities lord Vishnu had said that one should get up early in the morning and after performing the ritualistic 'achaman', he should remember me by chanting my one thousand names. Next, he should take his bath according to the rituals mentioned in the scriptures, as follows– He should remove some soil from near the roots of tulsi plant and pluck few tulsi leaves. Holding both the things in his hand, he should chant either Gayatri mantra or the mantra, 'om namo narayanay', so that they become sanctified. While taking his bath, it is a must to eulogize Ganga in the following way- ' O Ganga! Though have manifested from Vishnu's feet and hence called Vaishnavi. Myself being a devotee of lord Vishnu, you should protect me from all the possible sins I am likely to commit in my whole life.' A devotee should say this prayer for seven times and take the same number of holy dips in the river. He should then put on tidy clothes and perform 'tarpan' in the names of all the deities sages as well as ancestors.

4.2.25 The Significance of Charity made in Vaishakh

Continuing with his tales, Sutji said–' Once, king Ambarish asked Narad about the reason why lord Vishnu had special liking for the hindu month-Vaishakh. Narad's answer was that Vaishakh had been given special privilege by lord Brahma himself and is believed to fulfill all the wishes of a man. No other month is as dear to Lord Vishnu as Vaishakh. The sin raises its ugly head only till a devotee has bathed before sunrise in the month of Vaishakh but once he has taken his bath all his sins just disappears. This is also the period when all the deities are believed to dwell in all the rivers, ponds, lakes, apart from the holy rivers. Great significance has been attached to doing charitable deeds in this month, especially providing water to thirsty. Similarly, donating certain articles like umbrella, fans, shoes, all have their own importance. One who gets constructed an inn for the comfort of the travelers and provides water to them attains imperishable virtues. No charitable deed can ever match the virtue of donating food grains and one who accomplishes this great act can be aptly called a 'Pita' (Father).

4.2.26 Ayodhyapuri

Once, on being asked by sage Bhardwaj and few others about the grandeur of Ayodhya, Sutji replied–' Ayodhya, a sacrosanct city is based on the bank of river Saryu. It is the very city where the famous king Ikshavaku ruled once upon a time. The term Ayodhya means unconquerable and consists of three root letters: a- symbolizing Brahma, y-symbolizing Vishnu and dh-symbolizing Rudra. It is a place where lord Vishnu has his abode for eternity and does not leave it even for a moment. According to the scriptures Ayodhya is based on Sudarshan chakra. It is well expanded in the radius of one yojan. Its eastern boundary stretches up to one yojan from a place called 'Sahastradhan'. Similarly, the western front stretches up to one yojan from a place called 'Sama', the southern up to one yojan from the bank of Saryu and its northern boundary up to one yojan starting from the bank of river Tamsa. In ancient times, a brahmin named Vishnu Sharma had performed an austere penance at Ayodhya. Lord Vishnu had appeared after becoming pleased by him and had created a holy place by digging up the earth with his Sudarshan chakra. Anybody, who takes a holy dip in Chakrateerth becomes absolved of all his sins.

4.3 Brahm Kand

This Chapter contains 8 sections.

4.3.1 Rameshwar Kshetra

Once, Shaunak and few other sages asked Sutji as to how could a man become free from the bondage of the world. They also inquired whether there was an existence of any such holy place capable of liberating a man from heinous of sin.

Sutji replied–' Ramteerth is supreme among all the places of pilgrimage. A mere sight of this holy place is enough to free a man from the bondage of this mortal world. Going on a pilgrimage to Rameshwar gives virtues similar to what

is attained by performing all the yagyas. One, who takes a holy dip at Setu Rameshwar, attains to Vishnuloka. Merely by sleeping at the sea shore of Rameshwar a man gets absolved of heinous of sins like brahmhatya, etc. A man is blessed if his remains are consigned to the holy waters at Rameshwar after his death. Scriptures say that five types of sins are as grave as the sin of brahmahatya–

One, who criticizes sages
A selfish person who cooks food only for himself,
One who destroys well laid path making it difficult for people to tread upon,
One who accepts food from a 'chandal' and
One who sells food grains to a chandal. But, all these just disappears once the sinner reaches Rameshwar.

4.3.2 Setu Bandh

All the sages were curious to know about the holy places in the vicinity of Rameshwar. Sutji replied–Sri Ram replied went into exile accompanied by Sita, his consort and his younger brother, Laxman. Ravan, the demon king who ruled over Lanka deceitfully abducted Sita. Subsequently, Sri Ram befriended Sugreev and killed Bali, who harboured enemity against him. Sugreev sent monkeys in all directions to find out where Sita had been kept by Ravan. Later on Sri Ram reached Mahendra Parvat accompanied by Laxman, Hanuman, Sugreeva, Jambavan, Nal and may more brave warriors. They stayed for a brief period at Chakrateerth, where Vibhishan came to see Sri Ram. Eventually Vibhishan was nominated the king of all the demons by Sri Ram to the great displeasure of his brother Ravan.

Sri Ram and his army faced an uphill task of reaching Lanka for they had to cross the ocean, which lay as a great barrier between them and their destination. Samudra (ocean) revealed to Sri Ram that Nala had divine powers and whatever he would throw in the Ocean would not sink down but keep on floating. Nala tried to check the authenticity of Samudra's statement by throwing a huge rock into the ocean, as he himself was not aware of his powers. To the sheer amazement of everybody present there the rock started floating on the surface of the ocean instead of sinking down. All the rest of the monkeys tried to emulate Nala's feat by throwing huge rocks into the ocean and to their own surprise found that the rocks did not sink. This was how a bridge was built and across the ocean which made it possible for Sri Ram and his army to cross the ocean. Then length of Setu Rameshwar Bandh is hundred yojan and it is ten yojan broad. There are many holy places situated on the bridge prominent among which are Chakra-teerth, Paap-vinashan teerth, Sita -sarovar, Mangal-teerth, Amrit-watika, Brahma-kund, Hanumat- kund, Agastya-teerth, Ram-teerth, Laxman-teerth, Jaya-teerth, Laxmi-teerth, Agni-teerth, Shiv-teerth, Shankh-teerth, Yamuna-teerth, Ganga-teerth, Koti-teerth, Manas-teerth and Dhanushkoti teerth.

4.3.3 Rameshwar Linga

Describing how Sri Ram had installed Rameshwar linga, Sutji said–' After killing Ravan, Sri Ram enthroned Vibhishan as the king of Lanka. While returning to Ayodhya he made a brief stop at Gandhamadan mountain. Since the thought of having killed a brahmin (Ravan) kept on tormenting him, he decided to atone for his sins. So, he installed the idol of Rameshwar linga at Rameshwar setu. Rameshwar linga is so sacrosanct that all the holy places, sages and ancestors are believed to exist within the temple premise of Maheshwar linga. Being installed by Sri Ram himself, this particular linga has special significance attached to it. One who goes on a pilgrimage to this holy place is certain to attain salvation even if he were a 'Mlechha' (born in a low caste).

4.3.4 DharmaRanya Kshetra

Once, sage Vyas went to meet Yudhisthira, who requested him to describe the significance of Dharmaranya kshetra.

Sage Vyas replied– ' O king! Once, Dharmaraj-Yudhisthira did an austere penance to please lord Shiva. As usual, Indra became scarred because he thought that Dharmaraj was doing penance with the intention of acquiring Indraloka. He and other deities went to seek the help of lord Brahma, who did not have any clue. So, all of them went to Kailash mountain to seek Lord Shiva's help. Since Shiva was aware of Dharma's motive, he explained to the deities that there was nothing to worry about. But, Indra was not satisfied and the thought of loosing his kingdom continued to torment him.

Indra then instructed a beautiful Apsara named Vardhini to go to the place where Dharma was doing penance and disturb him by corrupting his thoughts. Vardhini went to the place where Dharma was engrossed in his penance and was successful in disturbing him. When Dharma opened his eyes he found a beautiful Apsara in front of him. Vardhini asked Dharma–' O Lord! What is the objective with which you are doing such an austere penance? Being an embodiment of virtuosity yourself, you prevail in the whole world. So, in a sense you already the lord of the world - what else do you need?'

Dharma told Vardhini that he was doing penance with the objective of having a divine glimpse of lord Shiva. Vardhini informed him that Indra was scarred of losing his kingdom and hence had sent her to disturb his penance. Dharma was pleased by her truthfulness and wanted to reward her for that. Vardhini expressed her desire of having her abode in Indraloka for eternity and also of having a place of pilgrimage named on her. Dharma blessed her after which she returned to Indraloka.

Dharma once again engrossed himself in penance. Ultimately, Lord Shiva became pleased and appeared before him. ' Ask for any boon and it shall be bestowed to you', said Lord Shiva. Dharmaraj replied -' O lord! I want this place to be named after me. I also request you to grace this place by your presence.'

Lord Shiva blessed him and fulfilled both his wishes. This was how Dharmakshetra got its name. Subsequently, lord Shiva appeared in the form of Dharmeshwar linga in accordance with the second wish of Dharmaraj. After his penance was over, Dharma also had created a holy reservoir over there which is believed to absolve a man of all his sins.

4.3.5 Loss of Moral Values in Kaliyuga

On being asked by Yudhisthira about the life-style of people in Kaliyuga, sage Vyas replied– 'There will be a widespread prevalence of sinful deeds and lack of moral values in Kaliyuga. People would become untruthful and would become critical of revered sages. Moral values would decline to such an extent their minds would be preoccupied by nothing else but the thought of sex. In Kaliyuga women will feel most insecure and even her near and dear ones would become untrustworthy - men belonging to their own gotras would try to exploit her. Brahmins would be criticized because of their inappropriate conduct- They would become arrogant, would start trading their knowledge and would not follow the teachings of the Vedas.

Similarly, Kshatriyas would become cowards and a mere reference of battle would be enough to scare them. Majority of people would indulge in immoral deeds like gambling and consume variety of intoxication. They would always look out for an opportunity to grab other's wealth by deceitful means. Married women would not fulfill their obligation towards their husbands. Cows would give lesser milk and trees would bear fewer fruits. Young girls would become pregnant at the raw age of eleven years. Brahmins, by their conduct would undermine the importance of holy places and would indulge in excessive eating and drinking. In Kaliyuga, people would not give any importance to caste system. Kings would loose their kingdoms and Mlechhas would become the rulers. Treachery, enemity and disrespect towards elders would become the norms of the day.

4.3.6 The Significance of ChaturMasya Vrata

Once, on being asked by Narad about the importance of Chaturmasya, lord Brahma said–' Chaturmasya is the period of four months during which lord Vishnu is believed to take rest in ksheer-sagar. So quite naturally, all the oceans, rivers and ponds are believed to attain divinity due to the presence of Lord Vishnu in ksheer-sagar during this period. This is the reason why great importance has been attached to taking holy bath during this period. A devotee, who observes austerities related with Lord Vishnu during these four months, becomes absolved of all his sins. All the deities are believed to dwell within Lord Vishnu during this period. Going on pilgrimage to holy places and taking holy dips in rivers bestow indescribable virtues.

A devotee must not forget to perform the rituals of 'Tarpan' after taking his daily bath. He should also observe abstinence and avoid indulging in sensual pleasures during this period of four months. There is special significance of making donations during this period, especially donating food-grains.

4.3.7 Importance of Abstinence during Chaturmas

Continuing with the importance of austerities observed during Chaturmas, Lord Brahma said–' Human-beings are bundle of desires and long for worldly things. So, there is a great importance of abstinence and forsaking things, which one is very fond of. One who relinquishes his most favourite thing during this period gets the same thing in abundance in the next world. A householder, who renounces his family life for the sake of his devotion during this period, becomes free from the tortures of recurring births and deaths. Similarly, relinquishing the use of chilly in one's food during this period helps him to acquire great fortune. Renouncing silk cloths during this period gives imperishable joy. One should avoid wearing black cloths during this period. Combing and shaving are prohibited during this period.

A devotee should worship Lord Vishnu on the auspicious day of Kark sankranti. Normally black plums are offered to Lord Vishnu while worshipping. Celibacy is believed to be the best austerity and anybody who observes it during the period of chaturmas, never experiences sorrow in his life.

4.3.8 Rituals Pertaining to Shodash Upachar

Once, on being asked by Narad about the proper methods of performing Shodash upachar rituals, lord Brahma said –'In normal circumstances, when lord Vishnu is worshipped by employing the rituals of Shodashopachar it is considered as 'Tapa'. But, when the same rituals of shodashopachar are employed to worship lord Vishnu during chaturmas, it is considered as 'Mahatapa'. In the same manner, all the austerities that are observed during Chaturmas attain greater importance.

Lord Brahma then went on to elucidate the proper method of performing the rituals of 'Shodashopachar'–' "A particular 'mahasukta' of Yajurveda consisting of sixteen ' richas are chanted while worshipping Lord Vishnu. Similarly richas like 'sahastra-sheersha purushah' and fifteen others are considered to be most appropriate for the worship of almighty Vishnu. First of all, a devotee should perform the ritual of 'nyas' by mentally associating all the sixteen richas with different organs of the body as per the instructions given in the smritis. The same rituals of 'nyas' are then performed on the idol of lord Vishnu or Shaligram. After that an invocation is made to Lord Vishnu by chanting the first richa of Purush sukta–'Sahashtra sheersha Purushah' with a slight modification i.e. by adding 'om' in the beginning of the mantra. Similarly, Lord Vishnu and other 'Parshads' should be installed at the place of worship by chanting the second richa- 'Purush evedam'. With the chanting of third richa, Lord Vishnu's lotus feet are washed after which 'ardhya' is offered with the holy water collected from all the seven seas and other holy rivers. Subsequently, the ritual of 'achaman' is performed amidst the chanting of fifth richa. The ritual of ablution is then performed in which the idol of Lord Vishnu is bathed amidst the chanting of the sixth richa. The idol is adorned with beautiful apparels amidst the chanting of seventh richa.

Similarly, a sacred thread is offered to Lord Vishnu amidst the chanting of eighth richa while sandalwood paste is smeared on the idol amidst the chanting of ninth richa. Subsequently, amidst the chanting of tenth, eleventh, twelfth and thirteen richas, flowers, incense, lighted lamp and naivedya are offered to the deity respectively. Naivedya should consist of cereals. While performing 'aarti' the fourteenth richa should be chanted. A devotee should then circumambulate around the idol amidst the chanting of fifteenth richa. Imagining himself as an inseparable part of lord Vishnu, he should meditate amidst the chanting of the sixteenth richa."

4.4 Kashi Khand

This Chapter contains 5 sections.

4.4.1 Vidhyachal Obstructs the Path of Surya

Once, sage Vyas narrated the following tale to all the assembled sages– ' Once, while wandering about, sage Narad arrived at Vindhyachal mountain. He was received with great honour and respect by Vindhyachal mountain. But, when the time arrived for Narad to take his leave, he took a deep sigh, which made Vindhyachal extremely perplexed and he asked Narad if anything was wrong. Narad replied–' Your rival-Meru mountain is superior to you in every respect and this is the fact I am lamenting about. My deep sigh is just the indication of my worried state of mind.'

Vindhyachal mountain was filled with inferiority complex and started waiting for an opportunity when he could prove his superiority to Meru mountain. He thought–' Perhaps Narad was right for even Lord Surya has great respect for Meru's might and this is the reason why he circumambulates my adversary. If I am able to beat Meru in height then may be Lord Surya would start circumambulating me and this way I shall prove my superiority to Meru.'

Now, Vindhyachal started increasing his height and in a short time its peaks became invisible. The fallout of this amazing incident proved to be quite catastrophic for the world because even Lord Surya was left stranded at a particular point in the horizon. As a result, one part of the earth became too hot for any life to exist. Similarly, the other half of the earth became unbearably cold. The time became still and everything went haywire in the world.

All the deities became extremely worried and went to Lord Brahma to seek his help. Lord Brahma advised them to go to Kashi and seek help from sage Agastya. Deities were pleased at their good fortune of getting a chance to visit Kashi. Deities, after reaching Kashi paid a visit to 'Manikarnika teerth' and took their bath. Subsequently, they went to Vishwanath temple and worshipped Lord Vishwanath. At last, they reached the hermitage of Agastya where he was busy worshipping a self made Shivalinga. The entire hermitage was crowded with young pupils of Agastya. After the pleasantries having been exchanged, sage Agastaya asked the deities about the purpose of their visit.

4.4.2 Agastya orders the Vindhya Mountains to diminish their size

When Agastya learnt of the problem created by Vindhyachal, he agreed to help the deities despite fully aware of the fact that once he left Kashi it would not be possible for him to see his dearest Kashi once again at least in his present birth. Before leaving for Vindhyachal, he sought permission from Lord Bhairav. He then reached the place where Vindhyachal had obstructed the path of Surya. Lopamudra, his wife accompanied him.

When Vindhyachal found Agastya starring angrily at him he became scarred and immediately minimized his size. Sage Agastya was pleased that his objective had been achieved without making any effort but he knew quite well that once he left the place Vindhyachal would regain his mammoth size. So he decided to do something so that Vindhyachal could not obstruct the path of Surya. He worked out a plan according to which he instructed Vindhyachal to wait for him until he returned after accomplishing his pilgrimage. Vindhyachal agreed assuming that Agastya would return in a short time.

Vindhyachal thanked his good fortune of escaping Agastya's wrath, which could otherwise have threatened his very existence. Sage Agastya then went away never to return and Vindhyachal kept on waiting for his arrival. This way, the path being cleared, Surya was once again able to move freely on its orbit without any problem and as a result normalcy returned to the world.

On the other hand, Agastya who was not at all happy leaving his dearest Kashi was desperate to get there back as soon as possible. But, he knew that his wish was going to remain unfulfilled. While wandering about, he reached Kolapur where he worshipped goddess Mahalaxmi. When goddess Mahalaxmi appeared, he asked her whether he would ever be able to reach Kashi in his present life. Goddess Mahalaxmi replied–' Your wishes will be fulfilled in the coming nineteenth dwapar, when you would incarnate as Vyas and would contribute a great deal in the propagation of the Vedas and Puranas. There is a sacrosanct place of Kartikeya not very far from here. Go there and pay your obeisance to Lord Kartikeya and he would unravel the mysterious aspects of Kashi to you.'

Sage Agastya and his wife Lopamudra then went to the mountain called Sri Shail, where Kartikeya lived at that time.

4.4.3 Kashi – The Sacrosanct Place of Pilgrimage

After travelling for sometime, both of them arrived near Sri Shail mountain. Pointing his finger towards the mountain, Agastya told his wife–'One, who has a good fortune of seeing the peaks of this mountain, never takes a second birth.'

Lopamudra replied in amazement–' If the sight of this mountain was capable of giving salvation then why do you long for Kashi?'

Sage Agastya then went on to clarify that there were many other holy places capable of giving salvation. Prayag is one such place. It is capable of bestowing all the four 'Purusharth' to man-Dharma, Arth, Kaam and Moksha. Apart from Prayag, there are many more holy places like Naimisharanya, Kurukshetra, Gangadwar, Avanti, Ayodhya, Mathura, Dwarka, Badrikashram, Purushottam kshetra which are capable of giving salvation to a man. But none of these places can match Kashi because Kashi is incomparable.

4.4.4 Lord Kartikeya Describes the Majesty of Kashi

Sage Agastya and his wife Lopamudra circumambulated Sri Shail Mountain and climbed up Lohit mountain where they found Lord Kartikeya. Both of them eulogized kartikeya by singing vedic hymns in his praise. Lord kartikeya was extremely pleased by their devotion and said- O revered sage! You can understand Kashi's importance by the fact that, though I am capable of reaching any place according to my wish but still, here I am doing this austere penance for the attainment of Kashi. I must confess that I have not been successful in my efforts till date. If any body thinks that he can attain to kashi just by performing austerities than he is totally wrong. Kashi can never be attained to until and unless one has the blessing of Lord mahadeva. And one who is fortunate enough to have reached Kashi must under no circumstances leave it till he is alive. O Agastya! You are blessed because you had the good fortune of residing at Kashi. Please allow me to touch your body, which has acquired holiness due to its proximity to Kashi.' Having said this, Kartikeya touched different parts of agastya's body as if he were touching the sacred soil of Kashi.

4.4.5 The Origin of Kashi

Sage Agastya asked Lord Kartikeya how the sacrosanct place, Kashi came into being. He also asked how Kashi became famous as a place capable of giving salvation to a man.

Lord Kartikeya revealed to Agastya that once Parvati had asked Lord Shiva the same question. Lord Shiva had told her–' At the time of deluge when every thing had submerged in the ocean and darkness prevailed everywhere, only BRAHM- the embodiment of truth existed at that time and nothing else. BRAHM, the absolute truth is indescribable and inexpressible. No name can be attributed to HIM. HE is the absolute truth, the ultimate knowledge, the infinite, the omnipresent and the eternal bliss. Though basically formless HE attained a form on account of HIS own wish. That form is none other than me. Later on I created Prakriti from my body. All three of us (Shiva, Parvati and Kashi) manifested simultaneously by the grace of 'Aadi purush' (The Almighty God).'

Continuing with the tale of Kashi's greatness, Kartikeya told Agastya-' There is no holy place as dear to Lord Shiva as Kashi, which is not abandoned by him as well as his consort-Parvati even at the time of deluge. Lord Shiva named this holy place- Ananda van, because it gave immense joy to him. Subsequently, Lord Shiva and goddess Jagdamba put a glance on the left portion of their

respective bodies as the result of which a divine entity manifested himself who was none other than Lord Vishnu and who was named Purushottam by Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva after blessing Purushottam went away. Later on, Lord Vishnu created a divine reservoir with his sudarshan chakra and filled it up with his sweat. He then engaged himself in an austere penance. Lord Shiva once again appeared along with Parvati and blessed Vishnu by saying-' This holy place will become famously known as Manikarnika because this is the very place where I had once lost my diamond ear-ring.'

Lord Vishnu made a request to Shiva –' May this place fulfill the wishes of those who seek salvation. Since it is blessed with your eternal presence hence its another name would be Kashi.'

Lord Shiva assured Vishnu by saying- ' This sacrosanct place is very dear to me and no event takes place here against my wish. Even if a person living here happens to be a sinner he has nothing to fear because I protect him. One who lives far from Kashi but remembers it with reverence becomes absolved of all his sins.'

There is a magnificent Shiva-linga at Kashi famously known as Kashi Vishwanath. Here is situated one of the twelve Jyotirlingas. Just as the Sun is visible in the whole world despite its presence at a particular point in the horizon, in the same manner Kashi has its influence throughout the length and breadth of the world.

4.5 Avanti Kshetra Khand

This Chapter contains 9 sections.

4.5.1 Sanat Kumar Glorifies Mahakaal Teertha

Once, goddess Parvati requested Shiva to describe the significance of Mahakaal teerth. Lord Shiva replied-" Once, Sanatkumar- one of the manasputras of Lord Brahma had gone to his father's abode, situated at a place near Meru mountain. Sage Vyas arrived there and asked him the same question. Sanatkumar had revealed to him that all kinds of sins loosed their evil influence at Mahakaal teerth. He had also told him that it was called 'Peetha' because Matrikas had their abode over there. Anybody, who is fortunate of leaving his mortal body at this holy-place, is freed from the vicious cycles of birth and death. This place is very dear to Lord Shiva and is also called by various other names like Ekamrak-van, Mahakaal-van and Vimukti-kshetra.

4.5.2 Kapal Mochan

Once, lord Shiva arrived at Mahakal forest with a skull in his hand. All the trees and vegetation were delighted to find him in their midst. They requested lord Shiva to remain their forever. Lord Shiva told them that it was not possible for him to stay there forever but on being requested once again agreed to stay

there for at least a year. After one year, when the time for departure came he released the skull from his hand as a memorial.

When lord Brahma came to know of this incident, he instructed all the deities to reach Mahakal forest without wasting any time so that a grand yagya could be performed at the place where Shiva had left the skull. All the deities went to the said place and worshipped Lord Shiva by employing the rituals of Pashupat vrata, which Lord Brahma had taught them. Lord Shiva became pleased by their devotion and said–' Perhaps you all are not aware that there was a specific objective behind my act of releasing the skull from my hand. This act of mine was done to protect your lives but it seems you are unaware of its significance. In a way, all of you have already received my blessings in advance for your deep devotion. What else do you wish for ?'

Deities were amazed by Shiva's statements and were wondering what Shiva was trying to convey. So, they requested Shiva to unravel the mystery so that they could understand what he meant to say. Lord Shiva told them-' The followers of Maya were planning to kill you while you were busy doing penance but no one of you was aware of their evil motive. I came to know about this in my deep state of meditation and dropped the skull from my hand. As soon as the skull touched the ground a thunderous sound was made as the result of which all the demons were killed instantaneously.'

All the deities thanked Lord Shiva for protecting their lives. In course of time this particular place became famous as Kapal mochan temple and is presently situated in Ujjain.

4.5.3 Various Names of Ujjainipuri

Once, sage Vyas requested Sanatkumar to reveal why Ujjainipuri was known by various names like Kanakshringa, Kushasthali Avanti and Padmavati.

Sanatkumar replied-' Once, Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva arrived at Ujjainipuri in search of Lord Vishnu, who had disappeared from his abode. To their pleasant surprise they found Lord Vishnu staying there. Both of them requested Vishnu to allow them to stay at Ujjainipuri and said-' O Lord! When did you create such a magnificent place with golden mountain peaks? Allow us to live in this beautiful city for we can not live in your separation.'

Lord Vishnu requested Brahma to make his abode in the northern part of the city while Shiva was told to make southern part as his abode. Lord Vishnu then told them-' Since you have referred to this place as a city of golden mountain peaks therefore from now onwards it would become famous as 'Kanchan Shringa' (golden peaks)'.

Sanat kumar then went on to explain why Ujjainipuri was also called Kusha sthali-' Having created the world, Lord Brahma requested Lord Vishnu to nurture it. Lord Vishnu agreed on the condition that Lord Brahma provided him a pious

place on the earth from where he could perform his duty. Brahma then picked up a handful of kusha grass and threw down on the earth. This way Lord Vishnu performed his duty as the nurturer of the world sitting on the seat of Kusha grass. This is the reason why this place came to be known as Kusha sthali.'

Sanat kumar then described how Ujjainipuri also came to be known as Avanti puri-' Once, after being defeated by the demons, deities fled to Meru mountain. Later on they went to Lord Brahma and sought his help. Lord Brahma took all the deities to Lord Vishnu. Hardly had they reached the abode of Vishnu and offered their obeisance, then they heard a heavenly voice- 'There is a sacrosanct place called Kushasthali in the forest of Mahakal van. This holy place is graced by the presence of Lord Mahadeva. Go there and engage yourself in austerities and you will certainly become the master of the heaven once again.'

Subsequently, all the deities went to a place called Paishachmochan situated in Kushasthali and engaged themselves in various austerities. As prophesized by Vishnu, the deities indeed defeated the demons and became the ruler of heaven. The term 'Avan' means 'the protector' and since it had protected the deities hence it became famous as Avanti.

Sanat kumar also described how Kushasthali also came to be known as Ujjaini-' Once, a demon named Tripur did an austere penance to please Lord Brahma. When Brahma appeared he expressed his wish of becoming immortal. Lord Brahma fulfilled his wish as the result of which Tripur became arrogant and started tormenting the deities. The deities sought the help of Lord Shiva, who assured them that he would kill the demon. Subsequently, Lord Shiva did kill Tripur with his most lethal weapon 'pashupat ashtra' after a fierce battle. The place where this incident took place became famous as Ujjaini because of the fierce battle fought between Shiva and Tripur.

Continuing with the tale which described the reason why Ujjainipuri also came to be known as Padmavati, Sanatkumar told Vyas-' During the time of ocean churning ambrosia had also emerged from the ocean bed along with many other valuable things. The demons wanted to drink ambrosia so that they could become immortal but the deities were against this idea. Very soon, the arguments turned into a major dispute and both the sides started quarrelling. Narad requested Lord Vishnu to do something in this regard. Lord Vishnu disguised himself as a beautiful lady and was successful in infatuating the demons. Finally, he started giving ambrosia to the deities who after drinking it became immortal. A demon named Rahu was sitting in the rows of the deities after changing his guise. Lord Vishnu was unable to recognize Rahu and gave some ambrosia to him mistaking him to be a deity. But, hardly had Rahu gulped down Ambrosia and before it could reach down his throat, Vishnu severed his head. Rahu's head became immortal as the result of ambrosia's influence. This incident had taken place at Mahakal forest. Later on all the deities distributed the whole wealth, which had emerged from the ocean among themselves. This

is the reason why Ujjainipuri came to be known as Padmavati because Padma is another name of Goddess Laxmi.

4.5.4 The Grandeur of Avantipuri

Sanatkumar says-' Once, Parvati requested Lord Shiva to explain why Avantipuri was considered so holy by the devotees. Lord Shiva told her that it was so because there were numerous holy places situated over there. Lord Shiva had told her-' There are four holy rivers flowing through the different regions of Avantipuri- Kshipra, Divya-nav, Neelganga and Gandhavati. There are temples belonging to eighty four shiva lingas, eight Bhairavas, eleven Rudras, Twelve Aadityas, six Ganeshas and twenty four goddesses. Not only this there are also temples of Lord Vishnu and Brahma. Avantipuri is spread in the radius of one yojan. There are temples belonging to ten different incarnations of Lord Vishnu- Vasudev, Anant, Balaram, Janardan, Narayan, Hrishikesh, Varah, Dharnidhar, Vaman and Lord Vishnu himself taking rest on Sheshnag. Apart from these there are many other holy places situated at Avantipuri, which enhances its sanctity and holiness.

4.5.5 The Descent of Narmada

Explaining the reason why Narmada had to descend down to earth, Sutji narrated a tale to the assembled sages-' Once, sage markandeya was taking rest at the bank of river Narmada where Yudhisthira accompanied by Draupadi arrived there. Yudhishthira curiously asked Markandeya about the reason he had chosen the bank of Narmada as his resting place when there were so many other holy places of greater significance. Sage Markandeya recounted a tale, which said how some sages had requested king Pururva to bring down river Narmada to the earth so that the whole world becomes liberated from its sins. Describing the holiness of Narmada, sages had told Pururava- ' The holy Narmada is capable of liberating the whole world from its sin. So, you should find means so that Narmada descends down to earth.' Later on, Pururva did an austere penance to please Shiva. When Lord Shiva appeared before him, Pururva expressed his wish. Shiva instructed Narmada to descend down to earth but she told him that she needed a base for that to happen. Lord Shiva then instructed Paryank- the son of Vindhyachal mountain to hold Narmada while she descended down to earth. Prayank agreed to do that and this was how Narmada came down on earth. Initially, the whole world was flooded with the waters of Narmada but at the request of the deities she minimized her size. Narmada blessed Pururva and instructed him to perform the rituals of tarpan in the name of his ancestors so that they became liberated from their sins. Pururva complied and thus by performing tarpan liberated all his ancestors.'

Having finished his tale, Markandeya told Yudhishthira that one who takes a holy dip in Narmada attains virtues similar to that of performing Ashwamedh yagya.

4.5.6 Narmada Marries Purukutsu

Markandeya says-' O Yudhishthir! King Purutkutsu was Samudra in his previous birth and had been cursed by Brahma. The descent of Narmada on earth made the deities extremely delighted and they requested Narmada to give them the privilege of experiencing her divine touch. But, Narmada refused to give them that privilege on the pretext that she was still unmarried and it would not be proper for her to do so. All the deities then requested her to become the consort of Purukutsu to which she agreed. This way, Narmada married Purutkusu. After getting married, Purutkutsu requested her to liberate his ancestors so that they could attain to heaven. Narmada readily obliged and this way Purutkutsu contributed in his ancestors' departure to heaven.

4.5.7 Manu Receives a Boon from Narmada

Markandeya says-' Manu ruled over Ayodhya during Swayambhuva manvantar. One day, while he was going to sleep, he heard a peculiar sound, as if numerous small bells were ringing. He was perplexed and could not ascertain the cause of that sound so he asked sage Vashishth about this. Sage Vashishth made a revelation by which Manu was startled. Sage Vashishth told him- There is a holy place called Tripuri situated at the bank of river Narmada. The sound that you heard last night emanated from the small bells attached to number of aircraft kept on the roofs of the residences of such people who are virtuous. O king! Only Narmada is capable of giving salvation to lowly of sinners.'

Manu was highly impressed and decided to go to Tripuri along with his whole clan. All of them took holy dips in the Narmada and became liberated from all their sins. Manu performed a grand yagya at the bank of Narmada to which all the sages and hermits were invited. Narmada became pleased by his devotion and expressed her willingness to fulfill any wish that Manu desired.
Manu requested her help in bringing down Ganga and other holy rivers to earth. Narmada blessed him and said- In the first half of tretayuga, one of your descendants named Bhagirath would accomplish this great feat of bringing down holy Ganga to earth. In the second half of the same era other holy rivers like Kalindi, Saraswati, Sarayu, and Mahabhaga would also manifest themselves.

4.5.8 Jamadagni receives Kaamdhenu

Markandeya told Yudhishthir-' Sage Jamdagni was a great devotee of Shiva and he lived in Narmadapur. He spent his day chanting mantras in the praise of Lord Shiva. Once, he performed an austere penance, which lasted for a month. Ultimately, Shiva manifested himself from the Siddheshwar Linga and appeared before him. Lord Shiva asked Jamdagni to ask for any thing he wished for. Jamdagni expressed his desire to have Kaamdhenu so that he could perform his rituals and other religious obligations without any problem. Lord Shiva blessed Jamdagni and disappeared. The next moment, Jamdagni found Kaamdhenu standing in front of his hermitage.

Now, Jamdagni got everything that he wished for. This way, he was a happy and contented life until one fateful day when he was killed by a greedy king named Kartaveerya, who subsequently took Kaamdhenu along with him. While the greedy king was still on his way, Kaamdhenu cursed him that very soon not only he but the whole caste of Kshatriya would be liquidated by Parshuram-Jamdagni's son, as punishment for having committed such a ghastly sin of killing an innocent sage. After cursing Kartaveerya, Kaamdhenu went to her original abode-the heaven. Later on, when Parshuram learnt of his father's slaying, he liquidated Kartaveerya and the whole caste of Kshatriya as had been prophesized by Kaamdhenu.

4.5.9 Description of Hell

Yudhishthira requested Markandeya to describe what a sinner had to go through in Yamaloka and also that what kind of a person should be considered as the most ghastly sinner.

Markandeya replied- ' Donating food to needy people is an extremely virtuous deed and there is no virtuous deed greater than this. A person who donates cereals can be aptly called 'Annadata'- one who provides food. One who has never donated cereals in his lifetime is definite to go to hell and has to tread an arduous path leading to it that is ridden with prickly thorns, pointed nails and other sharp objects. The entire path leading to hell is extremely dark and covered with large pits. The path is also covered with unbearably hot sand spilled all over the place. The sinner is forcibly taken by the Yamdoots despite their reluctance. The sinners repent for the sins they have committed but it is of no use to them, as they will have to reap the fruits of their evil deeds. They have to undergo all sorts of painful experience- they are forced to pass through fire and pits full of filth.

Those sinners who have atoned for their sins are not treated so harshly by the Yamdoots. After they appear before Yamraj, Chitragupta reminds them of all the sins they had committed. Thereafter, Yamraj orders his attendants to purify the sinners by putting them into the ocean of the Hell. There are Twenty-eight types of hells- Atighora, Raudra, Ghortama, Dukhjanani, Ghorrupa, Tarantara, Bhayanaka, Kaalratri, Ghatotkata, Chanda, Mahachanda, Chndakolahala, Prachanda, Varagnika, Jaghanya, Avaraloma, Bhishni, Nayika, Karala, Vikarala, Vajravinshti, Asta, Panchkona, Sudirgha, Parivartula, Saptabhauma, Ashtabhauma and Deerghamaya. Each of the latter hell is more horrific than the former.Sinners have to undergo unbearable pain and sufferings in the hell. They are tied up by very hot iron chains and hanged down from trees. Yamdoots attach hot and heavy iron balls to their feet and thrash them with hot iron rods. They are then put into wells of filth. The tongue of a liar is rooted out with brute force and a person, who shows disrespect to his elders and teachers, his mouth is filled with hot sands and boiling oil. Similarly immoral women, who do not fulfill their obligation towards their husbands, are thrown into a horrific hell named Lohakumbh. O Yudhishthir! A man's life is too short and uncertain. One

is not sure when his final call would come. So, one should try to lead a virtuous life to the best of his ability.'

4.6 Nagar Khand

This Chapter contains 2 sections.

4.6.1 Trishanku cursed by Vashishth's Sons

Sutji once narrated the following tale to the assembled sages- In ancient times there lived a mighty king named Trishanku. He belonged to Suryavanshi dynasty. One day, he asked sage Vashishth whether there was any such Yagya by performing which, he would be entitled to go to heaven with his physical form. Sage Vashishth laughed at his naive query and told him that there was no such Yagya by performing which a man could go to the heaven with his mortal body. But, Trishanku was not satisfied by Vashishth's answer and so he went to ask the same question to Vashishth's sons who were one hundred in number. But even they corroborated their father's statement. Trishanku got infuriated and threatened them that he would appoint somebody else as his royal priest to get the same yagya performed as they all lacked the required knowledge and competence. Vashishth's sons also got angry and cursed him to become a 'chandal' (a low caste person). The next moment Trishanku indeed became a 'chandal' and was so much ashamed of himself that he decided to go to the forest after relinquishing his throne. He called his son -Harishchandra and narrated the whole tale of his misery. Before going to the forest he appointed Harishchandra as his successor.

One day, while wandering in the forest, Trishanku met sage Vishwamitra and narrated his miserable tale to him. Since Vishwamitra was a competitor of Vashishth, he took it as a golden opportunity to prove his superiority to his adversary. So, he assured Trishanku that he had the requisite power to send anybody to heaven and said- ' I shall help you perform a grand yagya, which would allow you to attain to the heaven with your mortal body. But before that you will have to go on a pilgrimage so that you become pure once again.' Both Vishwamitra and Trishanku set out on a pilgrimage and reached 'Arbudachal' where they met sage Markandeya. After the pleasantries were over, Markandeya asked Vishwamitra about Trishanku, who was standing quietly. Vishwamitra revealed everything to Markandeya and said - I had taken a vow not to take rest until Trishanku got absolved of the evil influence of the curse given by Vashishth's sons'. I have not achieved success in my objective till date, so I have decided to renounce the world.

Seeing Vishwamitra in such desperation, Markandeya consoled him and instructed him to go to Haatkeshwar where taking a holy dip in Patal Ganga would purify Trishanku and solve all his problems.Both Vishwamitra and Trishanku reached 'Haatkeshwar' and bathed in the holy Patal Ganga. To his pleasant surprise, Trishanku found that he had indeed become purified and all the lowly qualities had vanished within no time. Vishwamitra was delighted as the first condition for Trishanku's departure to Heaven had been met. He

decided to go to Brahma loka to request Lord Brahma to be present at the Yagya which was to be performed for the success of Trishanku's departure to heaven. But before leaving, he instructed Trishanku to make all the necessary preparations before his return.

After reaching Brahma loka, Vishwamitra narrated the whole story to Lord Brahma and requested him to grace the Yagya by his presence. Lord Brahma told him that it was just impossible for any mortal to attain to heaven in his physical form but he added that if Trishanku performed the rituals diligently then he would certainly attain to heaven after his death. Vishwamitra did not like Brahma's words and challenged him that no power on earth could stop him from sending Trishanku to Heaven.

4.6.2 Vishwamitra Commences New Creation

Vishwamitra then instructed Trishanku to make preparation for the Yagya. After everything was ready, Vishwamitra initiated Trishanku into the rituals of Yagya. Trishanku made offerings in the sacrificial fire at the instruction of Vishwamitra. The deities readily accepted all the offerings that were made to them. This way, the yagya continued for twelve long years but still there was no sign of Vishwamitra's desire of sending Trishanku to heaven getting fulfilled. Trishanku became dejected and told him about his decision to renounce everything and spend rest of his life doing penance as chances of attaining to heaven appeared impossible. He was also sure that Vashishth's sons would make fun of him if he went back to his kingdom without achieving his objective. But, Vishwamitra consoled him and said–' No power on earth can stop you from going to heaven with your physical form. You just need to have some patience and your desire will be certainly fulfilled.'

Vishwamitra decided to please Lord Shiva as he was convinced that Shiva was the only deity who could help him achieve his goal. He eulogized Shiva by singing hymns of praise in his name. At last, Shiva appeared before him and expressed his desire of fulfilling any wish of Vishwamitra. Vishwamitra requested Shiva to bestow on him the power of creation just like Brahma had. Lord Shiva blessed him and disappeared.Now, Vishwamitra was eager to test his powers so he began creating different things. He created Sun, Moon, Stars, oceans, Rivers, so on and so forth. In a short time the whole world was filled by his creations resulting into chaos all over. As the result of his creations, every natural thing became double in number- one that had already been created by Brahma and the second created by Vishwamitra. Now there existed two suns, two moons, so on and so forth. Vishwamitra's amazing deeds had catastrophic fallout on the natural course of events.

Deities were scarred and rushed to seek the help of lord Brahma. They told Brahma that if Vishwamitra was not stopped the whole world was doomed to destruction. Lord Brahma appeared before Vishwamitra and ordered to stop doing creations. Vishwamitra told him that he was ready to do that if Brahma helped Trishanku attain to heaven with his mortal body. Seeing no other option,

Brahma accepted Vishwamitra's condition. This way, Vishwamitra was able to send Trishanku physically to heaven with the help of Lord Brahma.

4.7 Prabhas Khand

This Chapter contains 11 sections.

4.7.1 Description of Puranas and Up-puranas

Once, while describing the origin of puranas, Sutji told the sages who had assembled at Naimisharanya-' Lord Shiva had first revealed the contents of Skanda puran to Parvati at Kailash Mountain. Lord Brahma and few other deities were also present there at the time when Shiva was narrating the tale. Subsequently, Parvati narrated this tale to Skanda, Skanda to Nandi and Nandi to sages like Sanak, etc. and finally Sanak narrated it to Vyas. Now I am going to tell you the same tale which Vyas had narrated to me.'

Sutji began by saying-' During ancient times, Lord Brahma once did a very austere penance resulting into the manifestation of all the four Vedas. Later on, all the eighteen Puranas too appeared from his mouth. These eighteen Puranas were- Brahma Puran, Vishnu Puran, Shiva Puran, Bhagawat Puran, Bhavishya Puran, Narad Puran, Markandeya Puran, Agni Puran, Brahma vaivarta Puran, Linga Puran, Padma Puran, Varah Puran, Skanda Puran, Vaman Puran, Kurma Puran, Matsya Puran, Garuda Puran and Vayu Puran.Apart from these eighteen main Puranas, there are also similar number of secondary Puranas known as Up- Puranas. These Up- Puranas are - Sanat kumar, Narsimha, Skand, Shiva Dharma, Durvasa, Narad, Kapil, Manu, Ushana, Brahmand, Varun, Kalika, Maheshwar, Saamb, Saura, Parashar, Maarich and Bhargava.'

Sutji then went on to describe the other features of each Purana-' Brahma Puran contains ten thousand shlokas in it whereas Padma Puran contains fifty-five thousand shlokas. Similarly, there are twenty-three thousand shlokas in Vishnu Puran. Vayu Puran contains the tales related with Lord Shiva and it contains twenty-four thousand shlokas in it. Similarly the remaining Puranas like Bhagawat, Narad, Markandeya, Agni, Bhavishya, Brhmavaivarta, Linga, Varah, Skanda, Vaman, Kurma, Matsya, Garuda and Brahmanda Puran contain 18,000, 25,000, 9,000, 16,000, 14,500, 18,000, 11,000, 24,000, 81,100, 10,000, 17,000, 14,000, 18,000 and 12,200 shlokas respectively.'

Sutji told the sages that all the Up- Puranas owe their origin to the main Puranas which are eighteen in number. He also revealed to them that they could be categorized into three main types- Satvik, Rajas and Tamas. Satvik Puranas contain the tales of Lord Vishnu while Rajas Puranas contain the tales of Brahma and Tamas Purans contain the tales of Agni and Rudra. One of the chief characteristics of Puranas is that each of them is divided into five sections- 'Sarg' (Description of how creation began), 'Pratisarga', 'Vansh' (Description of prominent dynasties), 'Manvantar' and 'Vanshanucharit' (Tales related with the descendants of the famous sages).

4.7.2 Prabhas Teertha

On being asked by the sages about the prominent places of pilgrimage, Sutji named many holy places but according to him Prabhas Teerth was the crown of all the places of pilgrimage and was incomparable. Recounting a tale when Parvati had once asked Lord Shiva the same question, Sutji said-' At that time Shiva had told Parvati that Prabhas Kshetra was supreme among all the holy places and capable of liberating a man from all his sins. He had also told her that due to prevalence of sins in Kaliyuga people would not attain virtues despite going on pilgrimages. Shiva had also told her that this was the reason why he had created numerous holy places and kept them secret so the holiness of these places remained intact. I have manifested myself in the form of a divine Shiva linga at Prabhas kshetra. The whole universe has originated from it and merges into it ultimately at the time of deluge. The Shiva linga is called Somanath and very few people are aware of it's existence. This Shivalinga continue to exist since it's manifestation in a particular kalpa named Bhairav long ago. Unfortunately, people of kaliyaga under the influence of all pervading ignorance would fail to recognize the importance of holy places. Such people would try to demean the value of holy places and make fun of those people who go on pilgrimages. Being blinded by their superficial intelligence they would try to find faults with rituals and religion. Such would be the condition of the mortals in kaliyuga that they would criticize everything that is religious and spiritual in nature. How can one expect from these unfortunate people of kaliyuga to understand the significance of Prabhas kshetra and which is revered even by me ?'

Parvati, who had been listening to the tale with rapt attention, became even more curious to know about Prabhas kshetra. So she requested Lord Shiva to shed more light on the other important aspects of this sacrosanct place. Lord Shiva, continuing with his description of Prabhas kshetra, said- ' This sacrosanct place has temples of three deities on it's three sides. To its east is situated a grand temple of Surya Narayan while there is a magnificent temple of Madhav to it's west. In the same way there is a beautiful temple of goddess Bhavani to the north of Prabhas kshetra and towards it's south lies the ocean. This holy place is spread in the area of five yojans and is divided in three major areas- Maheshwar, Vaishnav and Brahma. There are about one crore temples related with different deities in Vaishnav and Brahma kshetras while Maheshwar kshetra contains one and half crore temples. As the name implies, each area has been named after one God forming the Trinity. Anybody who has the good fortune of living in the central part of Prabhas kshetra becomes absolved of all his sins even if he has committed most abhorrent sins. The significance of this holy place can be understood by the fact that a man born there does not take a second birth and attains salvation. One whom scholars of the Vedas call 'Kaalagni Rudra' is famously known as Bhairav in Prabhas kshetra.

4.7.3 Somnath Linga

Emphasizing on the significance of Someshwar linga and its deep association with the Vedas, Lord Shiva told Parvati-' The divine Someshwar linga exists since time immemorial and will remain for eternity. This revelation descended on me while I was engrossed in a deep state of meditation. Someshwar Linga has deep association with the Vedas and it enhances their sanctity by establishing itself in each of them at different periods of time during the day. During morning time Someshwar linga establishes itself in the Rigveda, during noon in the Yajurveda, during afternoon in the Sama veda and during evening time it establishes itself in Atharva veda.

4.7.4 Different Names of Somnath

Parvati curiously asked Lord Shiva about the reason why Somnath was known by so many different names. Lord Shiva said- ' Since the time this divine linga first manifested itself very few blessed souls had the knowledge of it's existence. Brahma has a life span of one kalpa at the end of which even he ceases to exist giving way to his successor- a new Brahma. In the same manner this divine Linga acquires a new name at the end of each kalpa. The present kalpa is seventh in order as six kalpas have already passed. The name of the present Brahma is Shatanand and this divine Linga is presently famous by the name of Somnath. Similarly it was famous as Mrityunjay during the time of Brahma named Virinchi. During second kalpa this Linga was famous as Kalagnirudra and the name of Brahma was Padmabhu. The third kalpa had Swayambhu as Brahma and the Linga was famous as Amritesh. The name of the fourth Brahma was Parmeshthi in fourth kalpa and the linga was famous as Annamay. In the same way the names of the fifth and sixth Brahma were Surajyeshtha and Hemagarbha respectively and the names of the Linga during their periods were Kritiwas and Bhairav Nath respectively.'

Lord Shiva also revealed to Parvati that the next kalpa- eighth in order would have Chaturmukh as Brahma and the divine Linga would be known as Pran Nath.Goddess Parvati then asked Shiva about the exact location of the Linga in Prabhas Kshetra. Lord Shiva told her that the sacrosanct place of Prabhas Kshetra was situated between the plains of two rivers Vajrini and Nyankumati. He also told her that the eternal Linga was not very far from the sea coast. Dwelling at length about the good fortunes of those living in Prabhas kshetra, Lord Shiva told her-' Anybody who does not abandon this holy place despite his hardships and troubles is certain to attain to my abode. One who has the good fortune of dying at Prabhas kshetra attains salvation. There will be prevalence of sins in Kaliyuga. As a result of this people would experience all sorts of hurdles and problems in their lives. To minimize their sorrows and to lessen their miseries, I have personally instructed Ganesh not to abandon this place even for a moment. Of all the Lingas present on the earth, Somnath is specially dear to me.'

4.7.5 Siddheshwar Linga and Siddha Linga

Describing the reason why this sacrosanct place was named Prabhas, Lord Shiva told Parvati- ' I dwell in the entire area stretching between the ocean in the south and river Kaureshwari. Being situated at the western coast, this entire area is radiated by Surya's light for a relatively longer period of time and hence it has been named 'Prabhas' meaning luster. This is the reason why there is situated a grand temple of Lord Surya in Prabhas Kshetra. Not far from this Surya temple is situated a magnificent temple of Lord Siddheshwar, which was famously known as Jaigishavyeshwar in ancient times.'

Lord Shiva then went on to describe why Siddheshwar was called Jaigishavyeshwar during ancient times-' There lived a sage named Jaigishavya in previous kalpa. He used to daily worship a Shiva linga named Mahoday, which had manifested on its own. Keeping in view Shiva's fondness for ashes, he used to smear it on his body hoping to please his deity. Not only this he even slept on ashes. He thus led an extremely austere life. At last he was able to please Lord Mahoday by his devotion. When Lord Mahoday appeared before him and expressed his willingness to fulfill anything he wished but Jaigishavya wanted nothing but total devotion in his deity (Mahoday). Lord Mahoday blessed him with immortality and said-' There would be nobody as powerful as you. Your feats achieved in spiritual things will be unmatched and you would become famous as 'Yogacharya' or teacher of Yoga. One who regularly worships this particular Linga which you have been worshipping with such deep devotion till now is certain to get absolved of all his sins.' Having blessed Yaigishavya thus, Lord Mahoday disappeared from his sight. After this incident, Mahoday linga also came to be known as Yaigishavyeshwar. In course of time, when the Kaliyuga of that Kalpa arrived, some sages named 'Balkhilyas' had gone to the same place and worshipped Lord Mahoday. Similarly, many more sages went there and attained 'siddhi' or accomplishment. This is how this Linga came to be known as 'Siddheshwar' (the lord of all accomplishments). There are many holy places in the vicinity like Siddha linga, which was installed by lord Surya. Anybody who worships this linga on the auspicious day of trayodashi of the bright half of the hindu month Chaitra attains virtues similar to the accomplishment of 'Pundareek Yagya'.

4.7.6 Chandra Deva Eulogizes Shiva

Parvati asked Lord Shiva about the reason Chandra deva had to install a Shiva linga at Prabhas Kshetra. Lord Shiva replied that Daksha had got married twenty seven of his daughters to Chandra Deva. Chandra Deva was very attached to Rohini, who was one of them and neglected others. When Daksha came to know about this he cursed Chandra Deva as the result of which he lost his luster and started waning day by day. The worried Chandra Deva did an austere penance for thousand of years to please Lord Shiva. At last Lord Shiva became pleased and appeared before him. Subsequently, Chandra Deva got a divine Shiva linga installed by Brahma and worshipped it for thousand of years. Lord Shiva appeared once again and expressed his willingness to fulfill any wish

Chandra Deva expressed. Chandra Deva requested Lord Shiva to dwell in the very Shiva Linga he had been worshipping till then. Lord Shiva revealed to him that there was no question of dwelling in the Shiva Linga as he had never abandoned it in the first place. Chandra Deva had regained his luster on account of his arduous penance. Lord Shiva blessed him and said- ' Since you have regained your luster (Prabha) by dint of your austere penance, this holy place will become famous as 'Prabhas Kshetra'. This Linga would be named upon you and become famous as Somnath Linga.'

Having blessed Chandra Deva thus, Lord Shiva disappeared. Later on Chandra Deva instructed Vishwakarma to build a magnificent temple at the sight. He also built a city nearby so that all the priests who were supposed to supervise the rituals of worship could live there.

4.7.7 The Significance of Getting One's Head Tonsured

Dwelling on length about the significance of getting one's head tonsured at holy places, Lord Shiva told Parvati-' A man should get his head tonsured whenever he gets an opportunity to visit a holy place because hair are believed to contain all the sins he has committed. There is a holy place called Padma teerth, not far from Somnath temple. A devotee should first get his hair removed at Somnath teerth and then immerse them at Padma teerth. This way he becomes absolved of all his sins. Women should have a symbolical cut of their hair. It is necessary to perform the rituals of tarpan in the names of ancestors after the head tonsuring ceremony. According to the scriptures, an ocean is considered holy and nobody should its holy water in an impure state. While bathing a devotee should chant the following mantra-

'Om namo Vishnu guptaaya Vishnu rupaaya namah;
Saannidhye bhava devesh saagare lavanaambhasi.'

There are about five crore Shivalingas submerged in the ocean near Somnath. There are also other holy places situated nearby like Agnikunda, Padma sarovar etc.

4.7.8 The Emergence of Sarasvati in Prabhas Kshetra

On being asked by Parvati about the emergence of river Saraswati at Prabhas Kshetra, Lord Shiva narrated the following tale to her-' The holy Sarswati flowing in Prabhas kshetra constitutes of five different streams- Harini, Vajrini, Nyanku, Kapila and Saraswati. Lord Vishnu once instructed Saraswati to carry 'Badwanal' (Submarine fire) and dump it in the ocean near Prabhas kshetra. After taking permission from Lord Brahma, her father Saraswati flew towards her destination. Ganga became sad at her departure so she asked her as to how could she have a glimpse of her now that she was going to such a distant place. Saraswati consoled Ganga by saying that she would be able to see her whenever she looked eastwards. The swift currents of Saraswati penetrated the earth and reached Patal Loka carrying Badwanal along with her.She continued to move beneath the ground towards her destination. As she reached Prabhas

Kashetra, four learned sages, who were well versed in Vedas arrived there and invoked Saraswati to give them the privilege of separate bath by dividing herself in four different streams.

The names of these sages were Hiranya, Vajra, Nyanku and Kapil. While Saraswati was about to comply with their request, suddenly Samudra arrived there and he too expressed the same wish. Thus Saraswati divided herself into five different streams- Harini, Vajrini, Nyanku, Kapila and Saraswati. Eventually, when Saraswati reached near the ocean, Badwanal whom she was carrying was surprised to see the high tides rising in the ocean. He thought that the Samudra was frightened of his fury so he asked Saraswati- Why is the ocean scarred of me? Saraswati inflated his ego by saying that who would not be scarred of him. Badwanal was pleased and wanted to grant her a boon. Saraswati remembered Lord Vishnu, who instantly gave his divine appearance in her heart. She narrated the whole story and sought his advise. Lord Vishnu advised her to ask Badwanal to make his appearance small like the eye of a needle. Saraswati, following the advise of Lord Vishnu asked Badwanal to become small like a needle and keep sucking the ocean. Subsequently, Saraswati summoned Samudra and told him to accept Badwanal to which he agreed. This way Samudra devoured Badwanal, who continues to suck the water of the ocean even today as per the instructions given by Saraswati. It is believed that tides are nothing but the manifestation of Badwanal's exhalations. This was how Saraswati emerged in Prabhas kshetra.

4.7.9 Prabhas – The Abode of Trinity Goddesses

Lord Shiva revealed to goddesses Parvati that Prabhas kshetra boasted of possessing many more Shiva lingas apart from the famous Somnath Shiva linga. He also gave names of some of the prominent Shiva lingas situated over there and said- ' To the North-East of Somnath temple is situated a grand temple of lord Sarveshvar Deva, who is also famously known as Siddheshwar. The reason behind this is that Shiva linga over there had been installed by the 'siddhas' (accomplished ones) in ancient times. People who are desirous of acquiring siddhis throng this holy place and engage themselves in austere penance. To the east of Siddheshwar temple is situated one more temple called Kapileshwar. It has been named after sage Kapil, who had installed the Shiva linga over there. A Shiva linga named Gandharveshwar is also situated nearby. This particular Shiva linga had been installed by a gandharva named Dhanvahan. To the east of Gandharveshwar temple is situated Vimaleshwar temple. It is believed that anybody suffering from tuberculosis gets cured after he worships in that temple. Dhandeshwar linga was installed by Kuber, who was bestowed with the lordship of wealth on account of his austere penance.'

Lord Shiva told Parvati that there were also temples of three goddesses in Prabhas Kshetra apart from Shiva temples. These three goddesses were Mangla, Vishalakshi and Chatwar representing the three types of power-will power, power of action and power of knowledge. Lord Shiva said-' The pilgrimage to Prabhas kshetra is believed to be incomplete until and unless

these three goddesses have been worshipped. Goddess Mangla represents the power of lord Brahma (Brahma shakti) while goddess Vishalakshi that of lord Vishnu. Goddess Chatwar represents my power. Goddess Mangla holds the privilege of getting worshipped first. During ancient times Chandrama did an austere penance for thousand of years and all the deities including Lord Brahma had gone there to witness his amazing feat. At that time goddess Mangla had blessed them and this was how she got her name.'

Lord Shiva then went on to describe how goddess Vishalakshi got her name-' A fierce battle had taken place between the deities and demons during Chakshus manvantar. Lord Vishnu fought along with the deities and helped them in defeating the demons. Demons fled towards the south but were chased by the deities. Realizing that it was not easy to annihilate the demons, Lord Vishnu remembered goddess Mahamaya and sought her help. Mahamaya appeared instantly and looked at Lord Vishnu with her large eyes. This is how she got her name. In the present kalpa she is also known as Lalitoma. To the south of Vishalakshi temple is situated the temple of goddess Chatwarpriya. Goddess Chatwarpriya is the saviour of people living in that area. Anybody who worships her on the auspicious day of Mahanavami with appropriate rituals is blessed.

4.7.10 Dvarka Mahatmya – Sages Queries to Prahlad

Once, few sages asked Sutji about the means by which Lord Vishnu could be realized in kaliyuga- the era dominated by sin and decaying moral values.

Sutji started by describing how Lord Vishnu on seeing the prevalence of sin in Dwapar yuga had to take incarnation as Krishna to liberate the world from the sinners. He also described in detail all the incidents culminating into the killings of many cruel demons -Kaaliya serpent, Chanur, Shishupaal and ogress like Putna. He gave in depth description of the events leading to the war of Mahabharat and how the infighting among the mighty Yadavas led to their destruction. He told them how a fowler mistook Krishna's feet to be a deer and killed him.

Sutji also told the assembled sages how the magnificent city of Dwarka had been submerged in the ocean ultimately. He revealed to them that the passing away of Krishna marked the advent of Kaliyuga and the situation became even worse. On finding how difficult it was to realize lord Vishnu in the Kaliyuga- the era dominated by sin, some prominent sages decided to seek Lord Brahma's help in this regard. After reaching Brahma loka, they eulogized Brahma and received his blessings. Lord Brahma told them to go to Patal loka and meet Prahlad, the supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu who according to Lord Brahma was in a better position to help them.

All the sages went to Patal loka as per the instructions given by Lord Brahma. There they not only found Prahlad but also the most charitable king-Bali. After the pleasantries were exchanged, they came to the real issue and said-' We are very much distressed by the prevailing situation where it appears that the evil

forces have overshadowed the virtuous ones. The ways shown by the Vedas are no longer in practice and the Brahmins are being tormented by the Shudras, who have become the rulers. We have come with a request and a desire to know whether there was any possibility of realizing Lord Vishnu in this dark era of 'Kali'. If yes then where can we find Lord Vishnu?'

4.7.11 The Sanctity of Dvarkapuri

Prahlad, being an ardent devotee of Vishnu himself, understood quite well, the desperation with which a devotee seeks his Lord. So he told them-' By the grace of Almighty Vishnu, I am revealing to you the name of that sacred place which has remained a secret till now. Kushasthal Puri is a divine city situated on the western coast. Nearby is the place where river Gomti meets the ocean and at this convergent point is situated the sacrosanct city called Dwarawati Puri, where you can find Lord Vishnu in all his glory of sixteen kalas. Blessed be the Dwarka Puri, which The almighty Vishnu has chosen as his abode and where he dwells in his glorious Chaturbhuj form. This is the very place, which even liberates the most fallen sinner from all his sins. There is a famous temple of Lord Trivikram at the bank of river Gomti and not far from this temple is a divine pond. Anybody desirous of salvation must bathe in this pond for the fulfillment of his wish. It is believed that before leaving for heaven, Lord Krishna had transferred all his divine powers into the Trivikram idol. So, there is no place as holy as Dwarka and if you are desirous of having a divine glimpse of Lord Krishna then you must visit Dwarka.'

All the sages thanked Prahlad for sharing his secrets with them because nobody else except Prahlad was aware of the fact that Lord Vishnu had given Dwarka the privilege of being his abode. These revelations made them more curious about Dwarka, so they requested Prahlad to disclose how the holy Gomti descended down to Dwarka.

Prahlad began by describing the virtues of going on a pilgrimage to Dwarka-' The mere resolution of going on a pilgrimage to Dwarka is enough to liberate one's ancestors from the tortures of the hells. Each step that a devotee takes towards Dwarka gives virtues similar to what is attained by performing Ashwamedh Yagya. One who encourages others to go on a pilgrimage to Dwarka certainly goes to Vishnu Dhaam.'

Prahlad then switched over to the second part of the sages' question and said-' There is an interesting tale describing how sage Vashishth had brought down Gomti from the heaven to earth. At the time of deluge when the whole world had submerged in water, a lotus flower manifested from Lord Vishnu's navel on which was seated Brahma. Lord Vishnu instructed him to perform his duty as a creator to which Brahma agreed. First of all Brahma created his ten manasputras (Sanak, Sanandan,etc.) and sought their help in increasing the population of the world by becoming householders. But, all of them were extremely virtuous and did not show any inclination towards getting married. Ultimately all of them went to the western coast and engaged themselves in

austere penance. Their penance continued for a number of years after which 'Sudarshan chakra' appeared before them. As all of them looked up in bewilderment, they heard a heavenly voice -' O sons of Brahma! Very soon the almighty Vishnu is going to manifest himself. The 'Chakra' you are seeing is his. You all must perform the rituals of 'ardhya' in the name of Lord Vishnu to show your reverence towards him.' All the Manasputras eulogized Sudarshan-Chakra with deep devotion. All of them wished that there were a holy river, with whose water they could perform the rituals of ardhya. But to their utter dismay there was no such holy river nearby. They then remembered Lord Brahma, who immediately understood what they desired. Lord Brahma instructed Ganga by saying-' Ganga! Go to the earth, where you would be known as Gomti. Sage Vashishth will lead you to your destination. Just follow him like a daughter follows her father.'

Finally, when sage Vashishth followed by Gomti reached their destination, all the Manasputras were delighted. They eulogized Ganga and expressed their gratitude to Vashishth for bringing Ganga on earth. All of them thanked Vashishth by saying-' Since you have brought Gomti on earth, you would be considered as her father.' They offered 'ardhya' to Gomti and subsequently eulogized Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu appeared after being pleased and blessed them-' Your unflinching devotion in me has pleased me no bound. Since you did this penance with the objective of Moksha (salvation), this place would become famous as Moksha Dayak (giver of salvation). This sacrosanct place would also be called Chakra teerth because of Sudarshan chakra, who informed you all of my manifestation at Dwarka Puri. I assure you that I won't abandon this sacrosanct place even for a moment.'

This way, all the Manasputras were finally successful in their objective of offering ardhya to Lord Vishnu with the holy water of Gomti. At last, Gomti having fulfilled her mission for which she had descended down to Earth merged with the ocean. Lord Vishnu disappeared from there and Manasputras continued to live there.

5 Shiva Maha-Purana

First of all, Sage Shaunak expressed his desire to Sutji about knowing the means, which could help a man in this era of Kali to attainment lord Shiva, by cleansing all the impurities of his mind and rectifying his inherent demonic tendencies. Sutji then described about Shiv Mahapuran - the supreme of all the puranas, which was narrated by Lord Shiva himself and which was later on retold by Sage Vyas with the permission of Maharshi Sanatkumar, for the benediction of common man. Sutji said, "By understanding the mysteries of Shivmahapuran and singing its praises, a man attains greater virtues than that which could be attained by being charitable or by the performance of all the `yagyas'. Contemplating on the subject matters of Shivmahapuran give auspicious fruits just like a 'Kalpa-taru' (A mythological tree which fulfills all the wishes). Shiv Mahapuran contains twenty-four thousand shlokas and seven.

Shivmahapuran is the best means for man's liberation.

PROPER METHOD OF LISTENING TO

SHIVPURAN Sage Shaunak requested Sutji to tell about the proper method of listening to Shivpuran, so that the man kind gets complete benefit. Sutji replied-

"First of all, an auspicious moment should be determined by an Astrologer. After that, friends and relatives should be invited, especially those who have the tendency of being away from such occasions. The sages and the virtuous people should be invited too. The 'Katha' must be help in scared places like Shiva temple, any place of pilgrimage or in one's home after doing a Bhumi Pujan of the land Where one intends to held the Katha of Shiv Puran. The canopy should be well decorated." "After making a resolution and doing worship of Ganapati - the destroyer of all hurdles and obstacles the Katha should be commenced. The person who is telling the 'Katha' should be facing north and all the listeners should sit facing east. The person who is telling the 'Katha' should be a scholar and should be capable of clearing all the doubts from the listener's mind. There should be no kind of distraction during the 'Katha' period. A devotee, who listens to the Katha leaving behind all of his worldlys worries get complete benefits. A devotee should also make donations and offerings according to his capacity and capability otherwise he would become a wretched man. The Mantra 'OM NAMAH SHIVAY' should be chanted through out the period of Katha.

RIGHT OF LISTENING TO SHIVMAHAPURAN:-

An uninitiated person does not have the right to listen to the Katha of Shivmahapuran. So a man desirous of listening to Shivmahapuran should first get initiated.

AUSTERITIES TO BE FOLLOWED:

A devotee who has taken the vow of listening to the Katha of Shivmahapuran, should follow a celibate life. He should sleep on the floor and should have only fruits in the diet. He can have his normal dinner only after the completion of the Katha. The diet should be fresh and pure. He should also try to avoid sinful tendencies like lust, anger, greed, attachment and condemning other, etc. Making donations of even meager things give undiminishing virtues.

RITES PERFORMED ON COMPLETION OF OBSERVANCE:-

After the methodical completion of the Katha, a devotee should perform UDDYAPAN (Conclusion of the Katha), which is similar to the CHATURDASHI UDDYAPAN. The devotee should also Charitably make donations to all the brahmins who have helped in the performance of Katha. On the next day the 'Path' of SHIV GITA should be performed. If the devotee (listener of the Katha) is a householders, then he should perform 'Havan' with the ghee prepared from Cow's milk, for the pacification of the unhindered completion of the Katha. The Havan should be performed, either with the help of 'Rudra Samhita mantras' or 'Gayatri Mantra' or with the shlokas of Puran.

This Purana consists of the following 7 Chapters:

5.1 Vidyeshwar Samhita

This Chapter contains 24 sections.

5.1.1 Sages Enquire

Viddyeshwar Samhita which is classified into twenty five chapters, has a narration in its first chapter which goes as follows-

Once upon a time, the sages were performing a yagya at Prayag kshetra. Sage Sutji came to know about this and arrived there. All the sages were very pleased to see him. They requested:-

"Lord! Though we have heard many tales from you regarding the man's benediction, but today we want to listen to something special. Because in this present era of Kali, when all the castes have forgotten about their respective duties we want to know is there any way to prevent the deterioration in the human values?"

Sutji replied:-

"O Great men! Your enquiry has great relevance in this era of Kali. I will certainly tell you about the way by the help of which a man can achieve benediction. Shivmahapuran contains the essence of Vedantic philosophy, which gives worldly pleasures as well as Salvation. Mere remembrance of it destroys all the sins of a man. One who studies the Rudra-Samhita attentively, his gravest of sins are destroyed instantaneously. One who studies Rudra-Samhita' silently,

sitting in front of Bhairav-idol, all of his aspirations are fulfilled. A man gets liberated from the sin of killing a brahmin, if he studies Rudra Samhita while circulbulating around a Banyan tree."

"Kailash Samhita is even Superior than Rudra Samhita, as it elaborates upon the meaning of Omkar. Shivmahapuran is created by lord Shiva Himself. It contains twelve Samhitas which are - Viddyeshwar, Rudra, Vinayak, Uma, Matri, Ekadash-rudra, Kailash, Shat-rudra, Koti-rudra, Sahastra Koti, Vayaviya and Dharma."

"Initially it contained one lac shlokas but it was precised to twenty-four thousand shlokas by sage Vyas. The present ShivPuran is the fourth one which consists of seven Samhitas. The earlier three Shivpuranas are unavailable. The scientific analysis of the Vedantic mysteries are the main subject of this divine Shivpuran. The study of Shivpuran helps a man to attain Dharma, Artha, Kaam and Moksha.

5.1.2 Proposition and Means

Sutji continued with his narration:-
"During the initial period of 'Svet Varah Kalp'. Six prominent sages collected near Triveni and started debating as to who was the greatest deity, among Brahma Vishnu and Mahesh. Their debate remained inconclusive, so they went to lord Brahma to seek the answer.

Lord Brahma told them:-

"O revered Sages! The source of Vishnu, Rudra all the deities including myself and all the other creations is none other Mahadeo. Union with the Shiva should be the objective of a man to attain that objective. Listening to the qualities of Lord Shiva, singing devotional songs in his praise and contemplating on him are the greatest means, which help to unite with Shiva."

5.1.3 Listening, Kirtan, Contemplation

SHRAVAN KIRTAN MANAN

Purification of the mind by the help of doing worship and chanting the name of God is called contemplation. Singing devotional songs in the form of stotra, or hymns of the vedas or even in one's own language is called Kirtan.

The above mentioned three activities are the supreme means to attain liberation.

5.1.4 Greatness of Shiva Linga

According to Sutji, if a person is incapable of following the above mentioned three activities i.e. Shravan, Kirtan and Manan then he should worship the

Shivalinga. Even by doing this he can attain liberation from all the bondages of the world.

Describing about the majesty of Shivalinga, Sutji says: "Lord Shiva is the manifestation of Almighty God (Brahma) himself and for this very reason he is known as NISHKAL. Because of his divine beauty, Shiva is called SAGUNA (God with form). The term SAGUNA is also expressed in another way, that is SAKAL. Shivalinga is worshipped since it symbolizes the form of Shiva. Lord Shiva is also considered to be NIRGUNA (without any qualities.)"

"In the first Kalpa of Swetvarah, a battle was fought between Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu to prove their superiority. Lord Shiva manifested before arrogance. After that he also showed them his form in the shape of Shivalinga. From that day onwards the Shivalinga became famous."

5.1.5 The Deities go to Kailash Mountain

Nandikeshwarji narrates the tale of battle between Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu.

"Once while travelling lord Brahma reached the abode of Lord Vishnu. He saw Lord Vishnu. He saw lord Vishnu resting on Shesh-Nag and being attended by Garuda and other attendants. When Brahmaji saw that Vishnu did not get up to receive him, he became very angry. Very soon, Verbal dual erupted between them. It became so severe that a battle was fought between them, which continued for very long time. All the deities arrived from the heaven to watch the battle. They became very worried when they saw no sign of battle coming to an end. They decided to go to lord Shiva, to seek his help.

5.1.6 Anaal-Stambh (The Pillar of Fire)

"Though Lord Shiva knew everything, but still feigning ignorance, he asked about the well beings of the world. The deities told him about the battle, fought between Brahmaji and Vishnuji."

"Lord Shiva then sent his one hundred Ganas to pacify both of them. He too went there accompanied by mother Parvati, boarded on a chariot. When Lord Shiva reached there, he saw that Brahmaji and Vishnuji were about to use their deadly weapons- Maheshwar and Pashupat respectively. Fearing the destruction, which these deadly weapons might have caused, Lord Shiva manifested himself in the form of 'Analstamba' (pillar of fire) between them. Brahmaji and Vishnuji had already released their weapons- Maheshwar and Pashupat. Both the weapons fell into that pillar of fire and got destroyed.

"Brahmaji and Vishnuji were very surprised to see the pillar of fire, which was so enormous in size that it reached the sky and penetrated down the earth. Vishnuji transformed himself into a boar and went to the 'Patal' (nether world) to find the base of that 'Pillar of fire'. But he was unsuccessful in his attempt and came back.

Similarly Brahmaji transformed himself into a swan and flew up in the sky to find its limit. While going through the aerial route he met a withered 'Ketaki' flowers, which had still some freshness and fragrance left in it."

"Lord Shiva smiled at the futile attempts of Shri Brahmaji and Vishnuji. As a result of his smile the Ketaki flower fell down from the branch. Ketaki flower told Brahmaji that he had been present there since the beginning of the creation, but was unable to know about the origin of that 'Pillar of fine'. The flower also advised Brahmaji against making any effort in that direction, as it would be of no use."

"Brahmaji then sought the help of Ketaki flower to give a false witness before lord Vishnu, that he (Brahmaji) had been successful in seeing the limit of that pillar of fire. Ketaki flower agreed. Both of them went to Vishnuji and Brahmaji told him that he had seen the limit of that Pillar of fire. Ketaki flower gave a witness. Vishnuji accepted the superiority of Brahmaji."

"Lord Shiva became very angry with Brahmaji. He proceeded to punish Brahmaji for his falsehood. Lord Vishnu requested Lord Shiva to spare the life of Brahmaji. Lord Shiva became pleased with Vishnuji and accorded him the same status as Hat of his own."

5.1.7 Shiva Obliges Brahma

Nandikeshwar continuing with the tale said:

"After according same status to Vishnuji as that of his own, Lord Shiva opened his third eye from it manifested 'Bhairav'. He ordered Bhairav to kill Brahmaji. Bhairav severed the fifth head of Lord Brahma with his sword. Brahmaji became very terrified. He was trembling in fear. Lord Vishnu felt pity on his condition and requested Lord Shiva to forgive him.

Lord Shiva then stopped Bhairav, but told Brahma.

"You spoke untruth with a desire to become worshippable. It is my curse that, you will not be worshipped by anybody. You will posses only four heads."

Brahmaji begged his forgiveness. Lord Shiva feeling pity on Brahmaji gave him a boon of being the presiding deity of all the yagya. Similarly the Ketaki flower also prohibited from being used during worship. But when Ketaki flower tendered his apology Shiva gave blessing that it would be fortunate to be offered to lord Vishnu during the worship.

5.1.8 Consecration of Maheshwar

Lord Vishnu and Brahma made salutations to lord Shiva and offered him a seat. They then worshipped him. This was the first time, Brahma and Vishnu had worshipped lord Shiva. Shiva was very pleased. Shiva-ratri has been continued

to be celebrated since that day. This particular day is considered to be the most auspicious day for the worship of Lord Shiva.

A devotee who fasts on Shiv ratri remaining only on fruits, attain virtues equivalent to the worship done for the whole year.

The idol of Shiva is consecrated on this day.

Lord Shiva has himself told the deities that he had manifested in the form of Pillar of Fire' in the month of Agahan and during the constellation of Ardra. He also said-

"One who has my darshan on this day (Shivratri) or worships me in my form of linga is dearer to me than Kartikeya. The place where, I manifested in the form of Pillar of fire will become famous as Lingasthan. Because of its resemblance with the 'Mountain of Fire', it will also be known Arunachal."

Later on Shiva brought back to life all the people who had died in the battle, fought between Brahmaji and Vishnuji.

5.1.9 Omkar

Lord Shiva then preached Brahmaji and Vishnuji on the five duties (Panchakritya) saying that 'Shrishti' (creation), 'Sthithi' (position), Samhar (Annihilation), Tirobhav (Concealment) and 'Anugrah' (obligation or kindness) are the five duties by which this world functions.

The source of this world in 'Sarga' or Nature. The establishment of this world is 'Stithi' or position. The tendency of this world to destroy is Samhar or destruction. The feeling of absence of this world is Tirobhav or Concealment and Moksha or Salvation is obligation or Anugrah.

Lord Shiva then goes on to explain that the first four duties like Sarga (Nature) etc help in the nurturement of the world and the fifth duty Anugrah is a giver of Salvation.

Lord Shiva also told them (Brahmaji & Vishnuji) that he (Shiva) had blessed both of them to look after the two duties i.e. Shrishti and Sthiti. Rudra and Mahesh have been entrusted with the job of Sanhar & Tiribhav. "The fifth duty 'Anugrah' has been kept by me." Said Shiva.

After describing about the allocation of the various duties, Lord Shiva described the meaning of 'OMKAR' to them. He said that OMKAR signified the world and contained the power of both Shiva and Shakti. This powerful mantra gives all kinds of worldly accomplishment as well as salvation.

After that Lord Shiva initiated both Brahmaji and Vishnuji with the OMKAR' mantra. He also preached them on the importance of the worship of Shivalinga.

5.1.10 Rituals of Shiva Worship

On the request of the sages, Sutji describes about the methods of worshipping Shiva Linga. He says

"One should construct a Shivalinga either of mud, rock or metal and establish it in such a place where it can be worshipped daily without any hindrance."

"The 'Char' (mobile) Linga should be small in size and the Sthira (Fixed) linga should be large. The Linga should be constructed along with the pedestal. The rule for constructing a Shiva Linga has been specifically described. The breadth of thickness of the Linga should be twelve times the thickness of the devotees (one who is constructing the linga) finger, while the length should be twenty-five times. After establishing the linga in the above mentioned way, it should be worshipped after performing the Shodasopachar. The thumb also symbolise a Shiva linga and its worship can be done. While worshipping the Shiva Linga, the mantra OM NAMAH SHIVAY should be continuously chanted. Chanting this mantra for five crore times, helps a man in attaining to the abode of Shiva. Worship of Shiva done during the mid night is considered to be especially fructifying.

5.1.11 Sacred Pilgrimages of Shiva

There are numerous places of pilgrimages connected with Shiva at the banks of river Ganges and river Indus. River Saraswati is considered to be a sacrosanct river and having an opportunity of living at its banks, helps in attaining to the abode of Brahma.

Similarly, there are famous temples of Lord Shiva at Kashi, Naimisharanya, Badrikasharam and Kedar etc. There are many temples of Shiva at the banks of holy river like Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati, Godavari, Narmada, Kaveri, Sarayu, Tungabhadra etc. Worshipping Shiva at these places bestows undiminishing virtues and liberates a man from all of his sins.

5.1.12 Conduct of the respective Castes

On the request of the sages, Sutji described about the virtuous and invirtuous activities of a man according to the respective castes be belong. He said:

"A brahmin who performs the rituals, as described in the Vedas, only is entitled to be called a Dwija. A brahmin who is not that proficient in the Vedas is called a 'Kshatriya brahmin'. A brahmin engaged in agricultural activities and business is called a Vaishya-brahmin'. A brahmin who is in the habit of condemning and criticizing others, is called a 'Shudra-Brahmin'.

"A Kshatriya who looks after the welfare of his subjects is called a king, while the rest of them are known as simply Kshatriya. A Kshatriya who indulges in business is called a Vaishya Kshatriya. Similarly a Kshatriya who engages

himself in the service of the three superior castes - Brahmin Kshatriya and Vaishya is called a Shudra Kshatriya.

5.1.13 Types of Dharma

Dharma is considered to be of two types-

1) Dharma performed by matter and Materials.

2) Dharma performed by indulging in physical activities.

The performance of Yagya etc comes in the first category. Making pilgrimages of holy places comes in the second category. During the Satya-Yuga, meditation was the way to attain self knowledge. During Treta-Yuga, it was attained by penance, during Dwapar Yuga it was attained by performing 'Yagya' while in the present era of Kali Yuga, idol worship is considered to be the means to achieve self-realization. Invirtuosity invites sorrow while virtuosity bestows joy and happiness.

'THE IMPORTANCE OF AGNI-YAGYA' The sages then asked Sutji about the Agniyagya Brahma yagya and Guru Puja in order of importance.

Sutji said-

"Performing 'havan' by offering matter and materials into the sacred fire, is called Agni yagya. This ritual is especially meant for the brahmachari (Celibates). Performing havana during the evening time brings prosperity, while performance of havana during the morning times gives long life. Making sacrifices to the deities during the day time is called 'Deva Yagya'. A brahmin should perform 'Brahma yagya with the help of the study of the Vedas."

"First of all lord Shiva adopted an auspicious day for himself and named it Sunday. After that he named the Six remaining days of the week and attributed them to the following deities respectively - Monday (Durga), Tuesday (Skand), Wednesday (Vishnu), Thursday (Yama), Friday (Brahma), and Saturday (Indra).

Worshipping the deities on their respective days give peace property and all kinds of accomplishments.

5.1.14 Appropriate Place and Time for Worshipping Shiva

IMPORTANCE OF PLACE:

In the Viddyeshwar Samhita of Shivapuran, describing about the importance of place and time for worship of Shiva says-

"Worshipping Shiva at a pure place in a house gives appropriate fruits, while worship done in a cowshed gives virtue, which are ten-times more than the

former one. Worshipping Shiva at the banks of a river gives, ten times more virtues than the second one. Worship of Shiva done either in temple, under the basil plant etc. or at the banks of Sapt Ganga, gives ten times more virtue than the third one. If Shiva is worshipped at the seashore than the fourth one, while worshipping Shiva on the peak of a mountain, gives ten times more virtue than the fifth one. But worship done with a fully concentrates mind, gives the best fruits.

IMPORTANCE OF TIME: During the Satya-yuga performance of Yagya and donations gave complete results. During the Treta-yuga it gave half, while in the present Kaliyuga it gives one-fourth results. Virtuosity performed with a pure heart does not go in vain. The other auspicious days in order of their increasing importance are 'Surya-Sankranti', Tula Sankranti and Mesh-Sankranti, Lunar eclipse and Solar eclipse respectively.

5.1.15 Worshipping the Idol of Shiva

It has been mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of Viddyeshwar Samhita that all the desires of a man are completely fulfilled, if he worship even in earthen idol of Shiva. For making an idol of Shiva. Day should be acquired from the base of river , pond, well or any such other place. In this clay fragrant powder and milk should be added to make it into a paste. After the constructing of idol is complete, it should be worshipped by all the sixteen types of rituals Shodasopachar.

If the Shiva Linga is constructed by somebody else, then three 'sera' of Naivedya should be offered to the deity, whereas if one himself has constructed the Shiva-Linga then the one-fourth of a 'Sera' should be offered.

If such an idol s worshipped for one thousand times, then it helps a devotee in attaining to the Satyaloka. Performing 'abhishek' of such an idol helps in self-purification, offering fragrance gives virtues, Naivedya increases the life span and worshipping it with 'Dhoop' gives wealth and prosperity respectively.

Worshipping the idol with a burning lamp gives knowledge to the devotee, whereas offering beetel leaves gives splendours.

A devotee who worships Lord Shiva in the hindu month of Magh and on Krishna Chaturdashi achieves longevity of life. Both, worldly pleasures and salvation are achieved by worshipping Shiva.

Worshipping Shiva in the hindu month of Kartik by going Japa, penance etc gives special fruits and the devotee becomes free from all kinds of diseases.

If a devotee worships lord Shiva on Sunday he becomes free from rebirth.

5.1.16 The Majesty of Pranav Panchakshar

The root sounds Akaar, Ukaar, Makaar, Bindu and Naad, which are free from the delusions and which originates from the mother Nature are called Pranav. It is of two types:-

a) Gross, b) Subtle. (Pranav Mantra OM AND OM NAMAH SHIVAY!

It symbolizess the unified power of Shiva and Shakti and destroyes all the sins of a man. A man desirous of worldly pleasures must chant the mantra 'Hrishva Pranav' containing the three root sounds A, U, & Ma, which symbolizes Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh respectively. On the other hand a man aspiring for the salvation, must chant the mantra 'Deergha Pranav' containing A, U, Ma, Naad and Bindu.

Before commencing the study of Vedas pronouncing OMKAR is a must. By chanting 'Pranav' for nine crore times man becomes pure. By chanting it for further nine crore times a man develops a control over natural forces like wind, smell and earth etc.

This Pranav mantra is considered to be most powerful and helps a man to attain the abode of Shiva.

5.1.17 Worldly Bondage and Salvation

In the eighteen chapter, all the sages requested Sutji to explain the meaning of bondages of life and Salvation

Sutji replied-

"Because of the eight types of bondages which a man feels on this earth, the soul is also known as "Jeeva". The Jeeva becomes liberated only after becoming free from these eight bondages. These eight bondages are - Nature, Intelligence qualitative- ego and the Panchatanmatras i.e. Sound, touch, appearance, taste and smell.

"Each soul is binded by these eight aspects of the Nature. The actions performed as the result of these bondages is called Karma. A man reaps the fruits of his actions- Whether good or evil. He either enjoys pleasures or suffers because of sorrow, due to this Karma." The soul takes rebirth in a cyclic was binded by the effects of his Karmas. The eight Chakra' are nothing but the eight forms of the nature. Shiva is beyond the reach of these eight chakras, on the contrary he has full control these eight chakras. So a man can become free from the bondages of this world, only by worshipping Shiva Linga. The linga is both gross as well as subtle. There are five types of Linga on this earth.- SWAYAMBHU LINGA, BINDU LINGA, PRATISTHIT LINGA, CHAR LINGA, GURU LINGA. A person desirous of worldly pleasures should worship the cross

Shivalinga, where as one who is desirous of attaining salvation must worship the subtle Shiva linga."

5.1.18 The Worship of Parthiva Linga

Sutji then explains the greatness of worshipping a Parthiva Linga-:

"Parthiva Linga is the most supreme among all the Shiva-Lingas. All the aspirtions of he deities as well as men are fulfilled by the worship of Parthiv linga. During the era of Satya, jewel was considered to be of prime importance, where as during Tretayuga and Dwaparyuga, gold and mercury had the prime importance respectively. In the present era of Kali, a Parthiva Linga hold this place of honour. The worship of Parthiva Linga begets more virtues than even penance. Just as Ganga among the rivers, Kashi among the sacred places of pilgrimages, Omkar among all the mantras are considered to be superior, In the same way Parthivalinga is considered to the supreme among all the Linga. Worshipping, a Parthiva linga with a 'Nishkam bhava' helps a man to attain liberation."

5.1.19 Methods of Worshipping Parthiva Linga

Elaborately describes about the methods of doing worship of Parthiva Linga:-

"After becoming fresh in the morning, a man should wear a rudraksha garland in his neck and apply bhasma (Ash) on his forehead. He should then worship the Parthiva Linga. He should chant the various names of Shiva, while worshipping the Parthiva Linga, like Har, Maheshwar, Shambhu, Shoolpani, Mahadev, etc. After worshipping the Parthiva Linga, it should be immersed in the river, Then the mantra - **OM NAMAH SHIVAY** should be canted with complete devotion. This is the method which has been described in the Vedas for the worship of Parthiva Linga."

5.1.20 Number of Parthiva Shivalingas

The numbers of Parthiva Linga differ according to one's desires. For example a man who is desirous of learning and knowledge must worship one thousand Parthiva Linga. A man who is desirous of wealth must worship. One thousand five hundred Parthiva Lingas. A man who is desirous of attaining salvation must worship one crore Parthiva Lingas.

Parthiva linga, which is equivalent to the height measured by the four fingers and which has been established on a beautiful pedestal, is considered to be the best. Parthiva Linga which is the half of the above mentioned height is considered to be 'Medium; and still half than the second category is considered to be inferior Parthiva Linga. It is better and advisable to worship a single Parthiva Linga daily, because it is equivalent to the worship of the whole world. Nobody is barred from worshipping Shiva, except the people whose ancestors had been cursed by the sages like Dadhichi, Gautam. Such people should also worship the eight idols (earth, water, fire, air, sky, sun, moon and the host) alongwith the Parthiva linga.

A brahmin should worship Parthiva linga as per the methods described in the vedas. Worship should be done, facing north.

5.1.21 Importance of Naivedya and Bilva Leaves

Sutji then described about the important of Naivedya offered to Lord Shiva.

"A devotee gets liberated from all of his sins merely at the sight of the Naivedya, which have been offered to lord Shiva. He attains great virtues by having the Prasada."

A man must not accept the Prasada if the worship have been done under supervision of a 'Chandala', but some of the Shivalingas like Baanlinga, Siddhalinga and Swayambhu Linga are exceptions to this rule. The prasada which has been offered to the Shivalinga and remains lying on it, is prohibited from having, but the prasad which is not touching the Shivalinga should be accepted.

BILVA (WOOD APPLE)-: Bilva fruit is considered to be a form of lord Shiva It's greatness has been eulogized even by the deities himself. It is believed that all the places of pilgrimages, dwell in the Bilva-leaf. Lord Shiva is believed to have his abode in the roots of the Bilva tree. A devotee who waters the roots of the Bilva tree attain greater virtues than offering water to the deities of all the places of pilgrimages. Similarly a devotee who worships the roots of the Bilva tree attains to the abode of lord Shiva.

5.1.22 The Majesty of Shiva’s Name

Sutji then goes on he explain the greatness of Shiva's name and the importance of Bhasm (Ash) and rudraksha beads in his worship.

The name of Shiva is as sacred as Ganges; Similarly 'Bhasm' and 'Rudraksha' are as holy as river Yamuna and Saraswati respectively. Therefore a devotee who possesses the name of lord Shiva on his lips, Who applies Bhasm on his person and who wears a rudraksha in his neck attain the virtues similar to that of taking a bath in the sangam. In the ancient time, a king by the name of Indrayumna got liberated from the bondages of the world, just by chanting the name of Shiva.

5.1.23 The Importance of Bhasma in Shiva’s Worship

Bhasma are of two types:-

1) Mahabhasma and 2) Swalpabhasma.

'Shrota' (listener), 'Smart; (rites according to the smritis) and Laukik (worldly) are considered to be the Mahabhasma. There are many types of Swalpabhasma

'Shrota' and 'Smart' are meant only for the brahmins. For the rest of the castes, 'Laukik bhasma' is appropriate. A brahmin must apply bhasma, only after initiating it with the mantras. The ashes which remains after burning dry cowdung is called Aagneya Bhasma. Applying 'Tripunda' on the forehead with the ashes after the completion of Yagya, is to the upanishad rituals like Sandhya and Japa should only be performed after applying tripunda on the forehead.

5.1.24 Importance of Rudraksha

Rudraksha is very dear to lord Shiva and hence all the sins of a man get destroyed if he chants the name of Lord Shiva using a Rudraksha beads. He also attain salvation after his death. It is believed that the origin of Rudraksha is connected with Shiva penance.

Once while Sadashiv was performing his penance, his eyes opened due to some disturbances. He was so remorseful that tears rolled down from his eyes. These tear-drops are believed to be the origin of the Rudraksha trees.

Rudraksha of specific colours have been prescribed for different castes. For example a Brahmin, a Kshatriya, a Vaishya and a Shudra have been instructed to put on Rudraksha of white colour, red colour, yellow colour and black colour respectively.

A person who wears eleven hundred Rudraksha on his body, he unites with Shiva. Rudrakshas are of various types i.e. EKMUKHA RUDRAKSHA (one opening) to rudraksha with fourteen openings. Each type of rudraksha has specific mantra and specific deity connected with it.

5.2 Rudra Samhita

This Chapter contains 149 sections.

5.2.1 Shrishti-Khand

The sages express their desire of knowing about the manifestation of Shiva and Uma, their marriage and their life as a householder and the other aspects of Shiva's divinity

Sutji narrated the story of Narad's attachment and lust - how they were ultimately destroyed. He also narrated of Narad's deep desire to know about Shiva.

5.2.2 Victory of Narada over ‘Kama’

Once upon a time a Narad was performing a penance in the cave of Himalaya mountain. Indra becoming fearful sent Kamadev to obstruct his penance. But Kamadeva was unsuccessful in his attempt as the place where Narada was doing penance was the same place where Lord Shiva did penance. After the completion of his penance, Narada became arrogant that he had defeated Kamadeva. He went to Kailash mountain and narrated about his feat to Lord

Shiva. Narada was naïve not to realize the fact hat is happened only because of the divine power of Shiva.

Lord Shiva listened to his arrogant statement. He advised Narada not to reveal this secret to anybody. But Narada went to Brahmaloka and boasted about his feet to Lord Brahma.

Lord Brahma listened to his boisterous statements and advised him not to reveal this to anybody.

But Narada was not satisfied. He wanted to give the news of his achievement to Lord Vishnu. So, he went to Lord Vishnu's abode and boasted about his feat of defeating Kamdeva.

Lord Vishnu with a desire to subdue his inflated ego, manifested his illusionary power with the blessings of Lord Shiva.

5.2.3 Narada's Ego Subdued:

While Narada was returning from Vaikuntha Loka, he saw a beautiful city. This city was ruled by a king named SheelNidhi. The king had a daughter and her Swayamvar was being organised. Numerous kings had arrived to take part in that Swayamvar. Narada, curiously entered the place were Swayamvar was being held. The king requested Narada to study the lines of the palm of the princess. Narada was infatuated by the princess beauty. He returned back to Lord Vishnu and expressed his desire of marrying that princess. He also requested Vishnuji to make him as handsome as himself (Vishnu).

Lord Vishnu made Narada's whole body very beautiful except his face. Which he made like a monkey. Narada being unaware of this happily went back to Swayamvar site. Narada sat among the kings - his face resembling like a monkey Lord Vishnu too was present there. The princess saw Narad, whose face was looking like a monkey. She was amused. Ultimately she put the garland around the neck of Lord Vishnu and went to Vaikuntha Loka alongwith him.

Some of the Shiva's gana too were present there in the guise of a brahmin. Their names were Marud ganas. When they saw Narada to see the reflection of his face in the water.

When Narada saw his face in the water, he saw that he was looking like a monkey. He became very furious and cursed the Marudganas to be the born as demons, even though being brahmins by birth.

Furious Narada then went to Lord Vishnu and cursed him- "You too would suffer due to separation from your wife, during your incarnation of Ram and the monkey would come to your help.

5.2.4 Vishnu Preaches Narad:

Lord Vishnu accepted Narada's curse without any hesitation. He then removed the illusionary powers by which Naradas' mind was influenced Now, Narada regretted his actions. Lord Vishnu told Narada that everything happened because of Shiva's divine illusions.

"You did not pay heed to his advice and hence Shiva by his illusions, has taught you a lesson. Shiva is beyond the reach of the three basic qualities-Satva, Rajo and Tamas. Therefore you must worship and contemplate on the name of Shiva. All of your sins will be destroyed.

After preaching Narada,, Lord Vishnu vanished from his sight. Narada then descended down to earth and while having darshan of numerous Shivalingas, he saw two of the Marudganas, whom he had cursed. He told both of them that they would take birth from a giantess's womb, but their father would be sages. He also told them that they would become very famous due to their devotion, Narad went to lord Brahma and requested him to tell about the divinity of Shiva.

5.2.5 Brahmaji Preaches Narad:

On Narad's request Brahmaji said-

"During the period of Mahapralaya (Final annihilation) nothing exist, except Shiva. The power which Shiva manifested from his own self came to be known as Ambika. This Ambika is understood to be the cause of the whole world as well as the Nature. Lord Shiva then created a Shivaloka, which is known as Kashi. It is the abode of Shiva and Parvati. A man who makes a pilgrimages of Kashi attains salvation.

5.2.6 The Origin of Vishnu

Lord Shiva, felt the need of somebody, who could look after the creation in his absence, as he wanted to retire along with Ambika at Kashi. The unified energy of Shiva and Ambika, resulted into a radiant physical form of a child. The child asked Shiva about his name and purpose of his being.

Lord Shiva named the child as Vishnu and advised him to do a penance which would help him to attain all kinds of accomplishment. He then offered him the knowledge of Vedas, through his breath. For this reason it has been said-

"YASYA NISHVASITAM VEDAH "

Meaning: Whose exhaled air is Veda.

Vishnu followed the instruction of Shiva and did a tremendous penance for twelve years, but still he was not successful in having a darshan of lord Shiva for the second time. He became worried. He heard a heavenly voice, instructing him to do further penance.

Vishnu then recommenced his penance. It continued for many days. By the blessings of Shiva, numerous fountain of streams errupted from his body, which spread in all directions in the form of Brahma. Vishnuji was very pleased to see that stream. He went to sleep in that streams due to which he also came to be known as 'Narayan'. One who has his abode in the water. After that, all the five elements manifested from his self. The three qualities- Salva, Rajos and Tamas as well as the ego manifested from his body. Similarly, five Tanmantras (Subtle form of matter), Panchabhuta (Sky water, air, fire and earth) and ultimately five sense organs and five organs of action also manifested from. Altogether twenty-four types of element manifested from the body of Shri Vishnu.

5.2.7 Origin of Brahmaji

Brahmaji told Narad-

"While Vishnuji was sleeping in the water, a lotus flower manifested from the navel of Vishnu according to the wish of Shiva. On that lotus was seated with four heads. I did not see anything except that lotus flower. I had a desire to know about my identity. So I entered into the hollow tubular stalk of that lotus flower, but I was not able to find the source. I returned back to the same place. Suddenly I heard a voice which instructed me to do penance. I did a tremendous penance for twelve years with a desire to know about my creator. Being pleased with me, lord Vishnu manifested before me with in his Chaturbhuj form, but I could not identify him, being influenced by the illusionary power of Shiva. I quarreled with him."

5.2.8 Dispute Between Brahmaji & Vishnuji

"I asked him as to who he was. Vishnuji replied that he was the fulfiller of all of his desires. But I replied to him that I only was the creator, nurturer and the supreme soul of this world. Vishnuji became angry and said that undoubtedly I (Brahma) was the creator of this world, but he (Vishnu) was the one, who had created me (Brahma) and the whole world. Vishnuji also ordered me to take his refuge and promised to protect me. But being an ignorant I did not believe him. A fierce battle was fought between both of us. A Shiva linga manifested between us to end the battle. We requested that Shivalinga to show its real identity. That Shivalinga had destroyed our pride."

5.2.9 Shabda-Brahma

We heard a sound OM. We became curious to know the origin of that sound. Vishnuji saw a letter 'A' towards the south of that Shivalinga. He also saw the letters 'U' and 'M' centre towards the north of the Shivalinga and in its centre respectively. He also saw the mantra 'OM', which was dazzling like a Sun. There was no beginning and end to this mantra OM. As we were making efforts to know about its origin, suddenly Shiva appeared in the form of a sage. He gave us the knowledge regarding OM. He also revealed to us that I originated from the letter 'A', Vishnuji originated from letter 'U' and Shiva himself originated

from letter M. The letter A signifies creation, U Signifies nurturement and M signifies salvation.

The three letters A, V & M also symbolizes the basic causes of creation. A or brahma also symbolizes the semen, U or Vishnu symbolizes the Vagina and the sound of OM is Maheshwar- the combined sound of A, U and M. All the three united from which manifested a golden egg. This golden egg remained submerged in the water for one thousand years. The almighty then cut that egg into two halves, from which appeared heaven and Earth. We also saw the divine beauty of Maheshwar."

5.2.10 Shabda-Brahma Tanu

Then we saw all the vowels and consonants emanating from the physique of Mahadeva. Vishnuji saw the forty eight letters within OMKAR, which in fact were the two following mantras- "TATPURUSHAY VIDDYAMAHE MAHADEVAY DHIMAHI, TANNO RUDRAH PRACHODAYAT." And "TATSAVITURVARENYAM BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHI DHIYO YONAH PRACHODAYAT."

"After that we also received the Mahamrityunjay mantras like 'OM JOOM SAH", "HRAUM HRIM JOOM SAH" and "TRAYAMBAKAM YAJAMAHE". After that we received the five lettered mantra "OM NAMAH SHIVAY", the chintamani mantra 'KSHAMYAUM', the dakshinamurti mantra - "OM NAMO BHAGAWATE DAKSHINAMURTAYE MAHYAM MEGHAM PRAYACHCHHA SWAHA. At last we received the great mantra TATVAMASI. Vishnuji was so enchanted by this mantra that he started chanting this mantra. We then prayed to Shiva-the creator, the nurturer and the destroyer.

5.2.11 Shiva Enlightens Brahma & Vishnu

"Shiva became very pleased with both of us. He preached us the contents of Veda. Shiva told Vishnuji about the methods by which his (Shiva's) worship could be done. He revealed to us that Vishnuji actually had manifested from the left portion of his Shiva's body and myself from the right portion of his body. He also blessed us that he would manifest his incarnation of Rudra from our body and also that the purpose of this incarnation would be to do annihilation. Lord Shiva revealed to us that his consort Uma, was in fact mother Nature and her power in the incarnation of Saraswati would be my consort. Laxmi, who would also manifest from the nature would be the consort of Vishnu."

5.2.12 Age of Brahma, Vishnu & Rudra

Bramhaji told Narada:

"Lord Shiva informed us that my day consists of four thousand eras and similarly my night too consists of four thousand eras. Since a month consists of thirty days and a year consists of twelve months. In this way my age was fixed to be of one hundred years. One day of Vishnu is equivalent to one year of Brahma. Vishnu's age too was fixed to be of one hundred years. The day of Rudra is

equivalent to one year of Vishnu and his age also was fixed to be of one hundred years.

5.2.13 The Methods of Worshipping Shiva

On the request of the sages, Sutji retold the preaching which had been narrated by Brahmaji to Narad. Describing the method of Shiva worship he says-

"A devotee should get up early in the morning and contemplate on Shiva, who gives benediction. After that, he should finish his daily routing work and perform rituals like 'Sandhya' and Vandana etc. After that, he should worship Shivalinga according to vedic rites like Panchopachar, Sodashopachar etc. He should also perform 'Abhiseka' with various offerings. At last, the should beg pardon for his sins."

5.2.14 Acquiring of Shiva Lingas by the Deity

Once, Brahmaji went to 'Kshirsagar' (the abode of Vishnu) accompanied by the deities and asked lord Vishnu how a man could be liberated from his sorrows. Lord Vishnu told them that this objective could be met b worshipping Shiva-Linga.

All the deities, then prayed to lord Shiva, who after becoming pleased instructed 'Vishwakarma' to construct a Shivalinga for them. Vishwakarma then made a Shivalinga for Kuber, a Shivalinga of yellow diamond for Dharmaraj, a Shivalinga of dark coloured diamond for Varun, a Shivalinga of Indraned diamond for Vishnu and a goldden Shivalinga for Brahmaji. Similarly Vishwadeva was given a Shivalinga made up of silver, the Ashwini Kumars were given Shivalinga made up of bronze, Laxmi was given a Shivalinga made up of Crystal (Sphatik), Sun-god was given a Shivalinga made of copper and the moon was given a Shivalinga made of pearl.

5.2.15 Methods of Worshipping Shiva Linga

Brahmaji has described the following methods for the worship of Shivalinga-

"After performing the rituals like 'Aachaman' and Pranayam a devotee should apply a tripunda on his forehead and wear a rudraksha on his body. After the study of Shanti-path and the performance of Devata-Namaskar, he should make a resolution if he has any wish to be fulfilled. Then the worship of Shivalinga should be done, with the help of Mahima-Stavan and offering flowers to the Shivalinga. The purity of the mantras should be maintained while chanting them.

5.2.16 The Virtues of Worshipping Shiva Methodically

It has been mentioned in the Shivapuran that making offerings in the form of lotus, Shatapatra, , Shankhapushpi, the leaves of wood apple tree, helps a man in attaining wealth and prosperity. For becoming free from disease, fifty lotus flowers should be offered to the Shivalinga. Mrityunjay-Jap should be chanted

for five lac times, for all types of accomplishment. One lac dhatura-fruits should be offered for long life, worldly-pleasure, as well as for attaining salvation.

5.2.17 The Origin of Kailash & Vaikunth

Brahmaji revealed to Narad how the process of creation commenced-

"After Lord Shiva vanished from our sight, I transformed myself into the appearance of a swan and Vishnuji transformed his appearance into that of a boar with the purpose of commencing the process of creation. First of all, I created the water. I poured a palmful of water into it and an egg manifested which consisted of all the twenty four elements. This egg was very enormous in size which made me confused. I did penance for twelve years. Vishnuji appeared before me. I requested him to bring that egg to consciousness. Vishnuji entered into that egg. As a result of this, Kailash mountain, and all the seven worlds came into existence. After that the static living things were created, which symbolized the dark quality (Tamogun). After that I created four footed animals like cows and Ox etc. inspite of these creations, I was not satisfied, so I again went into meditation.

As a result the deities were created which symbolized the virtuous quality (Satoguna). Once again I meditated and the human species came into existence, which symbolized the medium quality (Rajoguna). With the permission of Lord Shiva, I then created spirits like ghosts etc. After that I created my five Manasputras- Sanak, Sanadan etc. But they were so ascetic and detached from the world that they showed their disinclination in contributing in the process of creation. This made me angry, tears rolled down from my eyes. With the permission of Vishnuji, I did a tremendous penance to have a darshan of lord Shiva.

5.2.18 The Emergence of Rudra-Avatar

Brahmaji said to Narad:

"When I accomplished my penance, Lord Shiva manifested in his incarnation of Rudra from in between the eyebrows. Half of his body resembled like that of a woman (Ardhanarishwar). I requested him help me in my creational activities. Rudra created his hosts (Rudragana) who resembled like him. I requested him to create the mortals, to which he laughed and said, that he liberated mortals from their sorrow, so how could he fasten them with bondages. Rudra requested me to create the mortals and then he vanished.

5.2.19 Creation

Preaching Narad on the essence of Shivatattva, Brahmaji said-

"With the permission of Shiva, I created the five basic elements from which the matter is made and also all types of arts. I also created the time. Despite all these creations, I was not satisfied. I created sage Marichi from my eyes, Sage Bhrigu from my heart, Sage Angira from my head, Sage Pulaha from my Vyan

Vayu, Sage Pulatsya from my Udan Vaya, Sage Vashishth from my Saman Vayu, Sage Kratu from my Apan Vayu, Sage Atri from my ear, Daksha Prajapati from my vital air You (Narad) manifested from my lap. Sage Kardam and Dharma manifested from my Shadow. Then I divided my body into two parts, and from each of the two parts. Manu and Shatarupa manifested respectively. Both of them got married and in this way commenced the conjugal creation. Priyavrata and Uttanpad were the two sons born to them. Shatarupa also gave birth to three daughters whose names were Aakuti Devahuti and Prasuti. Sage Ruchi was married to Aakuti, Sage Kardam was married to Devahuti and Daksha Prajapati was married to Prasuti. Sage Yagya and Dakshina were born to sage Ruchi and Aakuti."

"Numerous daughters were born to sage Kardam and Devahuti. Similarly twenty-four daughters were born to Daksha and Prasuti. Daksha married thirteen of his dhauthers to Dharma.

The rest of his daughters were married to sages like Pulastya etc. All the three worlds are inhabited by the progenies of these sages. The same Daksha Prajapati had sixty daughters in another Kalpa, who were married to sages like Kashyap. Etc. In this Kalpa, 'Sati was one of his daughters who was married to Lord Shiva. 'Sati' being distressed by the disrespect sown by her father-Daksha, to her husband-Shiva, had given up her life, by jumping into the sacrificial fire. In her next birth she was born as Parvati and was again married to Shiva. This way, I created this world with the permission of Shiva."

5.2.20 Gunanidhi, The Brahmin's Son

Naradji asked lord Brahma, when did lord Shiva make Kailash as his abode and what was the reason of friendship between Shivaji and Kubera. Brahmaji narrated the following story- v There used to live a brahmin by the name Yagyadutt in Kampilyanagar, who was proficient in the performance of Somyagya. He had a son named Gunanidhi. Though he was a scholar but at the same time he was irreligious and kept bad company. He used to indulge in evil activities like gambling.

His father - Yagyadutt was unaware of his evil activities. Whenever he asked his wife about Gunanidhi habits and conduct, his wife used to tell lies and praised the conduct of Gunamidhi. Thus Gunamidhi's condition became worst day by days.

Yagyadutt married Gunanidhi with a girl belonging to a well to do family. But his habits had not changed. His mother tried her best to make him understand, but it was of no avail.

One day Yagyadutt saw, a gambler wearing his ring. He asked him about that ring. The gambler told him that his son - Gunanidhu had lost it to him, in the gamble. He also informed him that he had also lost numerous ornaments and other properties in the gamble.

Yagyadutt became very angry. He married with another woman after abandoning his wife and son.

5.2.21 Gunanidhi's Salvation

When Gunadhi came to know about his father's second marriage, he moved to another place, cursing his fate. He kept on walking till he became tired. He sat under a tree and started thinking about his further course of action. He heart was full of remorse and he repented for his past actions. As his mind was engrossed in such kind of thoughts. He saw somw villages going towards temple. They were carrying prasad in their hands.

"Since Gunanidhi was hungry, he followed them and after reaching the temple he sat at the main gate of the temple. IN the night, after the accomplishment of the Pujan, the devotees went to sleep. Gunanidhi entered the premise went to sleep. Gunanidhi entered the premise of the temple. The flame of the lamp was gradually becoming dim as the result of which he could not see properly. He tore some pieces of cloth, he was wearing and made a thick wick and put it in the lamp. Now the light was sufficient to enable him to see whatever had been offered to the deity."

"He carried as much fruits and other eatables as possible and tried to sneak out from the temple. Unfortunately, he dashed against a devotee woke up and chased him shouting thief-thief."

"Hearing his cries all the other devotees woke up and caught Gunanidhi. He was given such a nice thrashing that proved to be fatal and as a result Gunanidhi died."

The Yamadut's arrived to take his soul to yamloka. But right then, the Shivaganas arrived and prevented the Yamadutas from carrying his soul. They informed the Yamdutas that Gunanidhi was entitled for Shivaloka as he had devoutly observed the Shivaratri fast, had listened to the tales of Shiva and lighted up the lamp which was about to go off. The Shivaganas also informed the Yamadutas that, in his next birth Gunamidhi would become the king of Kalinga."

"In this way Gunanidhi attained to Shivaloka. In his next birth he was born as a son of king Arindam- the king of Kalinga. He was named as Dama." "When he was still young, his fatherArindam dies. So Dama succeeded him as the king of Kalinga. He renovated all the Shiva-temple, which came under his jurisdiction and passed a stricture which made the worship of lord Shiva compulsory for all the subjects. By the blessings of lord Shiva, he became the king of Alkapuri and was known as Kubera."

5.2.22 Shiva Blesses Gunanidhi

"During the Padma kalpa, Sage Vishrawa was born to sage Pulastya- the manasputra of lord Brahma. Vishrawa's son - Vishrawan ruled over Alkapuri for a long time. This city was constructed by the deity Vishwakarma. Vishrawan was a great devotee of Lord Shiva." "During the kalpa named Meghawahan, Gunanidhi did a tremendous penance for ten lac years. As a result of this penance his body was reduced to skelton."

"Lord Shiva became very pleased with him and appeared before him, accompanied by his consort Parvati. He told Gunanidhi to ask for any boon, which will be fulfilled." "When Gunanidhi heard Shiva's Voice he opened his eyes, but his eyes were dazzled by the sheer radiance of lord Shiva. He requested Shiva to restore the power of sight in his eyes. Shiva blessed him, as a result of which he was now able to see the divine sight of lord Shiva. But he became jealous of Uma, who was present by the side of Shiva. He was wondering as to who was this lady, dearer to Shiva than him. He glanced cruelly towards her. As a result of this his left eye lost the power of sight." "Parvati asked lord Shiva as to why was this sage (Gunanidhi) looking cruelly towards her. Shiva replied- "He is none other than your son. He is looking at you in astonishment as he his bewildered at the feats achieved your penance." "Lord Shiva then blessed Gunanidhi to become the king of the kings. He also assured him that he will always be present in the vicinity of Alkapuri. After being blessed by Shiva, Gunanidhi also made salutations to Parvati.

Parvati said-

"Since you have looked at me angrily your hatred and enemity (Bair) towards me was clearly visible. For this reason you will be known as Kubers." After blessings, Gunanidhi both Shiva and Parvati to a place called Vaishveshwar. Kailash mountain was situated near AlkaNagri.

5.2.23 Shiva goes to Kailash

When Rudra - the Ansha of the Almighty brahma, heard about the tremendous penance, Kubera was doing he started to play his 'damaru' (drum), the sound of which reached all the three worlds. Rudra then reached the place where Kubera was doing penance."

"Hearing the sound of his damaru, all the deities including Brahma, Vishnu and Sadashia appeared before him."

"When Kubera saw lord Rudra before himself, he offered his seat to him and worshipped him. He also worshipped the other deities. Rudra was so pleased with Kubera that he decided to stay near him. He called Vishwakarma and ordered him to conduct his abode at Kailash mountain, so that he could live in could live in the vicinity of his great devotee-Kubera. Kubera constructed a

beautiful city as per his instruction. An auspicious moment was chosen and Shiva went to live at Kailash mountain. He was coronated by the deities."

Brahamaji in this way told Narada about Shiva's departure to Kailash mountain.

SATI KHAND

In the Sati Khand of Rudra-Samhita, Narada enquires lord Brahma about the reason, why lord Shiva married Sati, inspite of being a 'yogi'. He also requested Brahmaji to tell, how Sati became the daughter of Daksha Prajapati and in her next birth as Uma the daughter of Himalaya. How did Uma get lord Shiva as her husband?- asked Narada

Lord Brahma narrated the following tale-

"A girl by the name of Sandhya manifested from my being. I was amazed by her heavenly beauty. Right then a divine entity appeared before me, whose beauty could not have been matched even by the deities. He was Kamadeva- the god of love. He influenced me to such an extent that I forgot that Snadhya was my daughter and got infatuated by her."

"When Rudra came to know about my lust for Sandhya, he admonished me and ridiculed about my character. I felt ashamed. But I also became jealous of Rudra. I decided to influence him with the power of infatuation, but I was unsuccessful in my attempts. I remembered lord Vishnu and he tried to make me understand about the futility of my attempts, as according to him (Vishnu), Rudra was beyond the reach of any human emotions."

"But I instructed my son - Daksha to help in the procreation of a girl child from the womb of Ashwinivirini. Thus Sati was born. Sati later on became famous of Uma and got Rudra as her husband on account of her tremendous penance."

"Though Rudra was free from all kinds of attachment, but still he became so influenced by the desire for procreation that he married with Sati. He enjoyed a blissful married life for a very long time."

"Rudra father in law, Daksha in his arrogance started condemning his son in law -Rudra. Once, Daksha organised a grand yagya ceremony. He gave invitation to everybody except Rudra and Uma. Despite of Rudra's disinclination to allow Sati to go to her father's yagya, She insisted and ultimately she was successful in convincing Rudra, to allow her to go."

"When Sati reached there, she was not given respect by her father-Daksha. Not only this, Daksha made fun of Rudra. Feeling dishonoured, Sati gave up her life by jumping into the sacrificial fire."

"When Rudra got the news of Sati's death he became extremely furious. To take revenge, he created Veerbhadra from his locks of hair. Veerbhadra went to

Daksha place and destroyed his oblation site. He severed Daksha's head. All the deities became afraid and prayed to Rudra, to have mercy. Rudra then brought back Daksha to life and helped him the accomplished of the still incomplete Yagya. The site where Sati had died later on became famous as Jwalamukhi devi."

"The same Sati in her next birth was born as Parvati to Himalaya. By her tremendous penance she again got lord Shiva as her husband.

After that lord Brahma told Narada about the manifestation of Kama - the god of love.

5.2.24 The Manifestation of 'Kama'

"When I became infatuated by the divine beauty of Sandhya, my infatuation resulted into the manifestation of my another Manas-putra named Kamadeva. His beauty and qualities were incomparable. His manifestation not only inflicted me with lust, but also my other Manasputras became filled up with lust. Kamadeva made salutations to me and asked as to what was his name and purpose of being. I gave him the name 'Pushpavan' and instructed him to help in the process of procreation. I also blessed him that nobody would remain unaffected by his influence including myself and Vishnuji."

5.2.25 Brahma Curses Kamadeva

After being named by lord Brahma as 'Pushpavan', Kamadeva was also given various names as Manmath, Kama, Madan etc by sages like Mareech, etc. They also said to him that he would be married to 'Rati' the daughter of Daksha.

Kamadeva himself was infatuated with the beauty of Sandhya. To test the authenticity of Brahma's boon, Kamadeva took out his five arrows and wanted to examine their power. The names of their arrows were Harshan, Rochan, Mohan, Shoshan and Maran.

These arrows had effect on all the people present there including lord Brahma and Sandhya. Getting affected by those arrows, fourty nine types of thoughts emerged in Brahma's mind. Similarly, flaws were clearly visible in Sandhya's behaviour.

Kamdeva became convinced of his powers and capabilities. But Dharma - the manasputra of Brahma was saddened by this event. He prayed to lord Shiva.

When Lord Shiva saw the condition of Brahmaji, he became amused and made fun of him and his Manasputras. Everybody was ashamed.

Due to his shame, Brahmaji perspired profusely. From his perspiration were created the Pitraganas. Similarly from the perspiration of Daksha Prajapati was created the most beautiful woman-Rati.

Brahmaji was very angry with Kamadeva because of whom he was ridiculed by Shiva. He cursed him and said- "You would be charred to death by the arrow of Shiva."

Kamadeva became very scarred and said that he was only testing the authenticity of his boon and he had no other evil intention. He also requested Brahmaji, not to curse him.

Feeling Pity on him, Brahmaji consoled him that, although he would definitely get killed by the arrow of Shiva's sight, yet he would regain his physical body as soon as Shiva get's married. Lord Brahma then went to Brahmaloka.

5.2.26 Kama Married Rati

Daksha requested Kamadeva to get married with his daughter - Rati. Kamadeva was very pleased at this proposal. Both Kamadeva and Rati got married.

5.2.27 Sandhya does Penance

Sandhya was very ashamed of herself. For the atonement of her sin she decided to do penance. She went to Chandrabhaga mountain and commenced her tremendous penance.

Lord Brahma then instructed Vashishtha to go to her in disguise and help in getting her initiated. He went to Chandrabhaga mountain in the guise of a brahmin and gave the mantra - OM NAMAH SHANKARAYA OM to her and also told her the methods of doing worship, then he returned back.

5.2.28 Sandhya Receives a Boon from Shiva

After sage Vashishtha who was disguised as brahmin went away. Sandhayd did penance as per his instructions. After the passing of one Chaturyuga, she had a darshan of lord Shiva.

Shiva being pleased by her devotion asked her to demand anything. Sandhya said-

"Nobody should have lust towards the member of his own clan. There should e no virtuous and chaste woman greater then me in this whole world. Anybody other than my husband who looks at me with evil intentions become an impotent man."

Lord Shiva blessed her by saying-

'EVAMASTU!'

Lord Shiva then categorised the life-span of a man into four parts - Childhood, adolescence, youth and old age. He than told her that it was written in her destiny to die by burning. He also advised her to go and surrender her body in the sacrificial fire of the yagya, performed by Medhatithi. "Before jumping into

the sacrificial fire, just remember anybody, whom you want as your husband, and your wish would be fulfilled in your next birth, When you would take birth as a daughter of Daksha Prajapati. Your father-Daksha Prajapati would marry his 27 twenty daughter to Moon, but the moon would have affection only towards Rohini and rest of his wives would be neglected by him. For this reason he would be cursed by Daksha. All the deities would take your refuge."

After blessing Sandhya in the way lord Shiva went back to Kailash mountain.

5.2.29 Sandhya’s Birth & her Marriage with Sage Vashistha

When lord Shiva went away. Sandhya got up and went to the place where Medhatithi was performing his yagya. She made a mental resolution to have that brahmin as her husband, who in reality was vashishtha and then entered into the sacrificial fire. The fire of the yagya burnt her body and carried it ti the solar-system, where it was divided by the sun-god into three parts and established in his chariot. The names of these three parts were Pratah-Sandhya, Madhyanha-Sandhya and Sayam Sandhya. Sandhya Vital force was absorbed by lord Shiva.

When the yagya ended, the sages were surprised to see the presence of a girl, who was radiating like gold in the sacrificial fire. They took out that girl child from that yagya-kunda. The sages then brought up that girl with love and affection. She was named Arundhati.

When she attained the age of five, Brahma Vishnu and Mahesg arrived and married her with Vashishth. Arundhati enjoyed a happy life and became famous for her chastity.

5.2.30 Appearance of Spring Season (Vasant Ritu)

Brahmaji told Narada that since the day he was hermiliated by Shiva, he had grudges against him and wanted to take revenge. "I wanted to subdue the arrogance of Shiva by proving it to him that even he could be binded by attachment. I asked Daksha and sages like Mareech as to how this feat could be achieved. As a result 'Rati' and 'Kama' manifested. I instructed Kama to influence Shiva by his powers. Kama agreed but requested me to create a suitably divine women for Shiva. Myself and Daksha became worried and during that time we exhaled fragrant air through our nostrils, which resulted into the creation of spring season. The spring season was looking divinely beautiful in her physical form. I handed over her to Kama and thus all the three of them (spring season, Kama and Rati) went to influence lord Shiva who was in his deep state of meditation.

5.2.31 The Creation of Marganas and Kama’s Futile Attempts

Kama tried his best to bring lord Shiva under his influence. All the living creatures were spell bound by his powers except lord Shiva and Ganesha.

Kama returned back to Brahmaji ad told him about his unsuccessful attempts. Brahmaji sighed heavily. From his sighes were created the ferocious ganas. These ganas were shouting "aray-Maray"(Kill-Kill). They eve tried to attack lord Brahma, Kama then pacified the anger of these ganas. These ganas were named as Maar.

Lord Brahma then sent these ganas to Shiva along with Kama and Rati to give it a second try. Once again their attempts went futile. All of them returned to lord Brahma and expressed their inability in influencing Shiva.

5.2.32 Dailogue Between Brahma & Vishnu

Lord Brahma then remembered Vishnuji, who appeared instantaneously. Brahmaji revealed about his intentions to him. LordVishnu told him that it was foolishness on his part to have enemity towards Shiva. But when lord Brahma kept on insisting, he revealed to him that this could be only achieved by the blessings of Goddess Parvati. Lord Vishnu said-

"If she becomes pleased with you, then she could help you in achieving your goal by taking birth in a human form and having Shiva as her husband. Instruct Daksha to do penance so that Parvati takes birth in his house."

5.2.33 Goddess Durga

After lord Vishnu went away, Lord Brahma started meditating on the form of goddess Durga. She appeared before him. Lord Brahma said-

"I need your help in binding Shiva with your maya."

Goddess Durga told Brahmaji that Lord Shiva in his incarnation of Rudra was beyond the reached of any kind of Maya. But when Brahmaji kept in insisting then goddess Durga agreed to help him in his effort. She said-

"I will take birth as the daughter of Daksha Prajapati and try to please him by my penance."

After assuring Lord Brahma she vanished. Lord Brahma too went to his abode.

5.2.34 Daksha Worships Devi

With the permission of lord Brahma, Daksha did penance for three thousand years. As a result goddess Jagdamba appeared before him. She blessed him by saying that she would take birth as his daughter and by her tremendous penance would attain Rudra as her husband. But she warned Daksha that if he showed any kind of disrespect to her, she would end her life.

5.2.35 Daksha Curses Narad

With the permission of lord Brahma, Daksha Prajapati created many thing just by his mental resolution. But finding the absence of any kind of evolution and development in them, he went to Brahmaji to take his advice.

Brahmaji instructed him to create by the help of copulation. Daksha Prajapati then married Asikti - the daughter of Panchajan. Ten thousand sons, including Haryasya were born to them, but all of them were directed by Narada to follow the path of salvation.

After that, Daksha married Panchajani from whom were born thousand of son, but all of them followed the path of salvation and were not interested in creation. Narada was instructed in changing their mind.

Daksha Prajapati became very furious with Narada and cursed him to become an eternal wandered. He said-

"You will never remain at a place for long."

5.2.36 Birth of Sati

When lord Brahma came to know about Daksha Prajapati's anger towards Narad he went to him and cooled him down. Subsequently sixty daughters were born to Daksha. He married his ten daughters with Dharma, thirteen daughters with Kasyap. Twentyseven daughters with Moon, two daughters with Bhutangiras, two daughters with Krishashva and the remaining six daughters with Garuda. Daksha mediated on the form of Bhagawati, and was instructed by her to do penance. Daksha did a tremendous penance and thus was born Uma to Daksha and Virani. Uma was brought up with great love and affection. Uma used to worship lord Shiva by singing devotional songs in his praise.

5.2.37 Sati does Penance

When Sati attained marriageable age, Daksha started worrying. Sati understood the reason behind her father's worried. She went to her Mother Virani and expressed her desire of marrying lord Shiva.

Her mother made all the arrangements so that Sati could worship Shiva without any problem. Sati commenced her austerity named Nandavrata which continued for a year. Being impressed by her austerities, all the deities descended down from heaven to see her.

5.2.38 Brahmaji makes a request to Lord Shiva

All the deities and the sages requested lord Shiva to get married, but Shiva did not want to curtail his freedom by getting married. When the deities insisted he told them to find a suitable match for him.

Brahma and Vishnu told Shiva about the tremendous penance Uma was doing to him (Shiva) as her husband. They also requested him have to go to her (uma) and fulfill her desire. Lord Shiva agreed.

5.2.39 Shiva Blesses Uma with a Boon

After Uma had accomplished her penance named Nandavrat, lord Shiva appeared before her and asked her to demand anything. Uma because of her shyness could not say anything. Lord Shiva knew about her desire so he said-

"You will have me as your husband."

Uma's face beamed with joy, but she shyly requested lord Shiva to keep this proposal before Daksha. Shiva agreed and said- 'Tathastu'. He then went back to his abode- Kailash.

Sati narrated the whole story to her parents. Both of them became very happy with this news. Lord Shiva then instructed Brahmaji to put a formal proposal to Daksha regarding his marriage with Sati. Lord Brahma went and informed Daksha about lord Shiva's proposal. Daksha was very happy at the proposal. Brahma then came back to lord Shiva.

5.2.40 Shiva Married Sati

Lord Shiva was anxiously waiting for his arrival. When Lord Brahma arrived he curiously asked about Daksha's response. When lord Brahma told him about Daksha's approval of the marriage. Shiva was very pleased at this.

Lord Shiva proceeded towards Daksha's abode on the auspicious moment of Phalgun, Krishnapaksha and on the thirteenth day of Phalguni Nakshatra. Sitting on the back of Nandi and accompanied by all the deities including lord Brahma, Vishnuji he reached Daksha's residence.

The marriage-procession was received by Daksha with great respect. Shiva narrated Sati in an auspicious lagna. Being pleased, all the deities eulogised Shiva and danced in joy.

5.2.41 Lord Brahma Faces the Wrath of Shiva

Daksha presented invaluable things to his daughter- Sati as dowry. Similarly the brahmins were presented with large quantities of wealth.

Lord Brahma was enchanted by the divine beauty of Sati. With a desire to see her face, he put logs of wood which were wet, into the yagni kunda and poured ghee on them. As a result the atmosphere was filled up with smoke.

Now Brahma removed the piece of cloth which covered her face. He became infatuated by her beauty. When lord Shiva discovered about his evil intentions he ran towards him menacingly. Lord Shiva wanted to kill him, but the deities prayed to spare his life. Lord Vishnu eulogised and worshipped him and only then his anger was subdued. Thus lord Brahma was forgiver by Shiva.

5.2.42 Deformed Face of Brahma

Though lord Shiva had forgiven Brahmaji, yet he instructed him to apologize by bowing down his head. Brahma did as he was instructed Lord Shiva then established on his head. Brahmaji became ashamed and asked as to how could he atone for his sins. Lord Shiva instructed Brahmaji that by worshipping him he could appropriately atone for his sins. He than instructed Brahma to go to the earth where he would be worshipped as 'Rudra Shir'. Shiv said-

"Your worship would help the brahmin in accomplishing every kinds of work. Taking lessons from you people would not dare to have extramarital affairs.

5.2.43 Shiva-Shakti as Husband & Wife

After reaching Kailash mountain, lord Shiva instructed all his ganas (attendants), not to disturb them (Shiva and Shakti). When all the ganas went away Shiva and Shakti enjoyed a blissful union for twenty five Deva-years.

5.2.44 Shiva-Shakti Depart for Himalya

When the rainy season arrived, Shakti requested Shiva to make a residence in such a place to that they could not be disturbed by rain etc. Lord Shiva smiled and said-

"Dear Sati! The clouds and rain will not dare to disturb if you are present by my side, no matter whereever we live - even if we live on the peaks of Himalayas.

Sati requested him to make Himalaya as his abode. Lord Shiva agreed and both if them shifted to their new abode at Himalaya, where they lived for ten thousand 'Deva-years'.

5.2.45 The Importance of Devotion in Kaliyuga

Sati requested lord Shiva to enlighten her mind by giving discourses. Shiva revealed to her the importance of devotion in the Kaliyug. He said that the value of knowledge (gyan) and asceticism (vairagya) would diminish to the extent of extinction in the era of Kali and only devotion would help a man in attaining liberation. Lord Shiva said-

"I had burnt the time (Kala) for the benefit of the devotees, with my third eye. For the sake of my devotees, I even abandoned Ravana without any partiality. For the welfare of my devotees, I even instructed Nandi to punish sages Vyas, who was exiled out of Kashi."

Shiva preached on may topics like devotion types of devotion, yantra, mantra, scriptures etc.

5.2.46 Sati's Doubt

Devarshi Narad who was listening to the divine tales of Shiva, narrated by lord Brahma with rapt attention, requested him to describe about other characteristics of Shiva. Brahmaji said-

"Once, lord Shiva accompanies by Sati, arrived at Dandak aranya, where Sri Ram was wandering in search of Sita, who had been abducted by Ravana. After walking for some time Lord Shiva saw Sri Ram and Laxman. Lord Shiva made salutations to Sri Ram. Sati was surprised at Shiva's behaviours. She asked lord Shiva about the reason he made salutations to Sri Ram. Shiva told Sati that he (Sri Ram) was his deity and an incarnation of lord Vishnu. But Sati was not satisfied by this reply. She wanted to test, whether Sri Ram was really an incarnation of lord Vishnu or not. She disguised herself as Sita and went to Sri Ram. But Sri Ram recognised her real identity and addressed her as Mother. Sati was ashamed but asked Sri Ram as to why did Shiva made salutations to her."

Sri Ram narrated the following story-

5.2.47 Shiva does not see Sati as his consort

Once, lord Shiva requested Vishwakarma to construct a grand palace and a magnificent throne for him. When everything was ready, Shiva invited all the deities for the crowning ceremony of lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu was requested to be seated on the throne and was worshipped by all the deities including Shiva himself. He assured lord Vishnu that all of his (Vishnu's) incarnations would be shown respected by his (Shiva's) devotees (Ram) am the incarnation of Vishnu."

Sati was now completely satisfied. She was also ashamed of herself that she had doubted Shiva's words. She went to lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva stopped looking at Sati, as her consort, because she had personified herself as mother Sita. This fact was even corroborated by a heavenly voice. Now Sati's heart was filled up with sorrows.

She followed disenchanted Shiva to the Kailash mountain, where he commenced his meditation and went into Samadhi. She sat down without saying a word. When lord Shiva came out from his Samadhi, he saw her stire sitting their. He felt pity on her and drove away her guilt and sorrows, by giving discourses.

5.2.48 Daksha’s Animosity towards Shiva

Once, the sages organised a yagya at Prayaga, which was attended by all the deities. Lord Shiva too had come, accompanies by Sati. He was eulogized and worshipped by all the deities and the sages.

Daksha arrived there and after making salutations to lord Brahma sat down without showing any kind of respect to Shiva. After that, all the deities and the sages came and made salutations to Daksha, but Shiva sat where he was sitting.

The ignorant Daksha cursed Shiva that from now onwards his (Shiva's) share would not be kept in the yagya.

At this Nandi- the vehicle of Shiva became very angry and cursed Daksha that from today onwards the brahmins would fail to understand the essence of Vedas.

Lord Shiva then pacified Nandi's anger and both of them went back to their abode. Daksha too went back to his place and started having hatred towards Shiva.

5.2.49 Daksha Performs Yagya

Daksha organised a yagya at 'Kanakhal' in which everybody except Shiva and Sati were invited. Sage Dadhichi arrived and not finding the seat for Shiva went back, saying that it was impossible to accomplish a yagya without Shiva.

Then Daksha commenced the yagya with the assistance of other sages who were present there.

5.2.50 Sati’s Arrival at the Oblation Site

When Sati saw all the deities going happily, she became curious to know where they were going. She requested her companion to ask the moon as to where he was going in such a cheerful mood.

The moon told her companion that they were going to attend the yagya ceremony, being organised by Daksha.

Sati was very surprised at this information. She went to lord Shiva and sought his permission to go there. Lord Shiva then told Sati that her father did not invite them because of the animosity he was having towards him (Shiva).

Sati became very furious and decided to go there to know about the reason why Daksha was performing the yagya without inviting her husband-Shiva. Shiva sent Nandi and other rudraganas as her escorts.

5.2.51 Sati’s Dishonor

When Sati reached, where Daksha was performing his yagya, she met her mother and sisters. They met her with all the respect and honour. But Daksha did not even caste a glance at her. Imitating him many other people did the same.

But Sati not bothering about the disrespect shown to her made salutations to both her parents. When she reached near the yagya-mandap she saw that shares of all the deities was there except that of Shiva. She became furious and asked her father as to why was Shiva not invited to the yagya.

Daksha then made fun of Shiva and cursed him. This made her more angry and she declared that she would give up her life in everybody's presence. After the declaration her mind was engrossed by the thoughts of Shiva.

5.2.52 Sati Gives Up Her Life

Sati then sat in padmasan and closed her yes. By her yogic powers she united with Shiva and her lifeless body fell into the yagya-kunda. This incident shocked everybody and the rudraganas furiously picked up their weapons. Right then a heavenly voice was heard.

"O mean Daksha! Share on you! you are a sinner and a fool. Now you are certain to face the wrath of Shiva. Because of your act, the deities too will have to suffer."

Daksha became scarred. He immediately eulogising lord Vishnu.

5.2.53 Manifestation of Veerbharda & Mahakali

When Nandi informed Shiva about Sati's death, he became very furious. He angrily pulled out a locks of hair and dashed it against the mountain, which got divided into two parts. From one part manifested the valiant Veerbharda and from the other part Mahakali.

Veerbhadra and Mahakali were instructed by Shiva to destroy the yagya of Daksha and to kill all the people who were present during the time of Sati's death, including the deities and the sages.

5.2.54 Veerbhadra & Kali Assemble their Army

After getting the instructions from lord Shiva, Veerbhardra marched with a huge army which included the mighty Shivaganas like Dakini, Bhairav and Kapalish etc. Goddess Kali to joined him with her army which consisted of all her nine incarnations like Katyayani etc. As the army marched on numerous auspicious signs were visible.

5.2.55 Daksha Experiences Inauspicious Signs

On the other hand Daksha experienced many inauspicious signs. His left eye, left army and left thigh started throbbing. He saw the vultures flying over his head. He heard the sounds of jackals howling.

5.2.56 Lord Vishnu Preaches Daksha

Daksha then prayed to lord Vishnu to rescue him from the imminent wrath of lord Shiva. Lord Vishnu preached Daksha and said-

"Daksha! Since you have committed the greatest sin by dishonouring Shiva and Sati. Even I can not prevent the calamities which you are certain to face."

As lord Vishnu was preaching Daksha suddenly there was a loud commotion. The army of Veerbhadra had arrived. Daksha was frightened and again prayed to Vishnu to save his life.

Lord Vishnu again expressed his helplessness and told him that because of him all the deities too would have to suffer.

5.2.57 Daksha Gets his Head Severed

A terrible battle was fought between the armies of Veerbhadra and the deities. The deities got defeated and fled away. They went to lord Vishnu and sought his help. Lord Vishnu decided to fight on the side of the deities.

The battle recommenced for the second time. Lord Vishnu having a dual fight with Veerbhadra and the deities were fighting against his army.

Suddenly everybody heard a heavenly voice which said that Veerbhadra was invincible. Hearing this, Lord Vishnu and Brahmaji went to their respective abodes.

Daksha ran for his life and hid himself behind the attar where the yagya was being performed. But Veerbhadra pulled him out from there and severed his head. He then threw his head in the agni-kunda. After this he returned back to Kailash accompanies by his army.

5.2.58 Contention between Kshuva & Dadhichi

Narad, who was listening to the divine tales of Shiva with rapt attention, was very curious to know about the reasons why lord Vishnu attended a yagya where Shiva was not invited and why did he fight a battle against veerbhadra despite knowing about his invincibility.

Lord Brahma told him that all this happened due to the curse of Sage Dadhichi-

In the ancient times, there used to live a king named Kshuva, who was a great friend of Sage Dadhichi. Due to some reasons both of their developed animosity towards each other. Dadhichi considered himself superior because of being a brahmin, on the other hand Kshuva considered himself superior on account of his wealth. The dispute took a worst turn and Dadhichi punched him on his head. As a result Kshuva felt down unconscious. When he regained his consciousness he attained sage Da dhichi with his weapon named Vajra, which injured Dadhichi.

Dadhichi sought the help of Shukracharya. Shukracharya healed his wounds by his mantras. He also taught Dadhichi the mahamrityunjay mantra. Dadhichi then did a tremendous penance to please lord Shiva. Lord Shiva appeared before him and blessed him with three boons, they were 1) his bones, would become as hard as lightning (Vajra), ii) he would not be killed, iii) he would never be humiliated.

Armed with these three boons, Sage Dadhichi again went to fight Kshuva. He kicked him, in return Kshuva too attacked him with his weapon named Vajra, but it did not have any effect on Dadhichi as his bones had become as hard as lighting.

King Kshuva did a tremendous penance to please lord Vishnu. Vishnu revealed to him that Dadhichi had become immortal because of the blessings of lord Shiva, but assured him that he would certainly help him in defeating Dadhichi.

5.2.59 Battle between Vishnu & Dadhichi

Lord Vishnu then visited the hermitage of Sage Dadhichi, disguised as a brahmin. On being asked by Dadhichi about the purpose of his arrival, he said that he had come with a desire of a boon on his heart.

Sage Dadhichi, by his yogic power came to know about the real identity of a 'Brahmin'. He told that he had been caught. Lord Vishnu was ashamed.

Lord Vishnu then went back to Kshuva and instructed him to go to sage Dadhichi and act as if he had accepted his superiority.

"Kshuva went to sage Dadhichi and did as he was instructed to do, but Dadhichi did not believe his words. Now lord Vishnu became angry and tried to kill him by his sudarshan chakra, but he was not successful, as the chakra, which was given to him by lord Shiva himself, was not willing to harm a devotee of Shiva.

"Lord Vishnu then tried to kill Dadhichi by shooting volley of arrows. The deities too attacked with their weapon. Sage Dadhichi threw a handful of Kusha grass, initiated with mantras towards them, which destroyed all the weapons of the deities."

"In the meantime lord Brahma arrived on the scene accompanies by Kshuva. He told the deities that it was futile to fight with Dadhichi as he was invincible, due to the boon given by lord Shiva,"

"Ultimately King Kshuva begged his forgiveness for his offence. Dahichi forgave him but cursed Vishnu including all the deities that they would be burnt to ashes by the wrath of Rudra."

"This was the reason why all the deities and lord Vishnu attended the yagya, organised by Daksha and got defeated by Veerbhadra."

5.2.60 The Deities go to Lord Shiva

The deities after being defeated by Veerdbharda went to Brahmaloka and narrated everything about the destruction of Daksha's yagya and also how his head was severed by Veerbharda.

Brahmaji became very sad. To bring Daksha back to life and to accomplish the still unfinished yagya, he went to lord Vishnu to take his help. All the deities accompanies him.

Lord Vishnu told them that it was wrong on the part of Daksha to have shown disrespect to Shiva. The deities were wrong to support him. Lord Vishnu then went to Kailash mountain, accompanied by Lord Brahma and all the other deities. All of them eulogized and worshipped Shiva. They also requested him to bring Daksha back to life.

5.2.61 Daksha becomes Alive

Lord Shiva became very pleased and agreed to make Daksha alive. All of them went to Kanakhal-the place where Daksha had organised the yagya ceremony. Veerbhadra too accompanied them.

When they reached the site, Lord Shiva could not hold his laughter after seeing the destruction of the site. Anyway, he joined the head of a goat to the torso of Daksha's body and made him alive. He also compensated for all the losses which had been caused by the destruction. All the deities became very pleased and they eulogised Shiva.

5.2.62 Daksha Organizes Yagya once again

Becoming pleased by the invocation and eulogy of the deities, Lord Shiva preached Daksha in the following way-

"The person who has the right knowledge (gyani) is the supreme among all human beings. An action which is performed in one's ignorance and jealousy does not liberate a man from his world bondages.

O Daksha then accomplished his yagya singing the praise of lord Shiva. He also give lots of donation to the brahmins. They everybody returned to their respective houses being fully satisfied.

Sati - the daughter of Daksha was reborn as Gauri- the daughter of Himalaya and Maina. By her tremendous penance she again had lord Shiva as her husband.

5.2.63 Parvat Khand: Himalya Marries Maina

Narada requests lord Brahma to shed light on the birth of Maina and also too she was married with Himalaya.

Brahmaji Said-

"After relinquishing her body, Sati - the daughter of Daksha attained to the abode of Shiva. In her next birth she was born to Maina - the wife of Himalaya and was known as Parvati. Maina had done great service to Sati in her previous life considering as her own daughter. For this reason she was blessed and got

Parvati as her daughter. Parvati did tremendous penance and got lord Shiva as her husband."

Continuing with his story Brahmaji said-

"Once Himalaya - the king of the mountains, decided to marry with the desire of expanding his lineage. The deities came to know about his desires and so they went to the Pitras and requested them to give their daughter - Maina, so that Himalaya could marry her. The Pitras agreed at this proposal. Thus Maina got married wih Himalaya. After the marriage ceremony the deities returned back to their respective abodes.

5.2.64 Maina gets Liberated from the Curse

Daksha had Sixty daughters, 'Swadha' was one of them and was married to the Pitras. In due course of time three daughters were born to them - Maina, Dhanya and Kalawati. Once all the three of them went to Swetadweepa to have a darshan of lord Vishnu. Right then, sages like Sanak, Sanadan etc arrived there. Everybody present there stood up in reverence, but Maina, Dhanya and Kalawati could not identify who they were and hence they remained sitting. Not only that, they did not even make any salutations to them.

The sages became angry and cursed them to be born as humans in their next birth. Maina, Dhanya and Kalawati became very afraid and requested to be pardoned.

Sages Sanak feeling pity on them told that Maina would become the wife of Himalaya, in her next birth and give birth to Parvati, Similarly Dhanya would be married to king Janak and Sita would be born to them, similarly Kalawati would be married to Vrishbhan and Radha would be born to them. Sage Sanak also told them, that in this way all three of them would attain to the heaven.

5.2.65 Invocation of Ua

Brahmaji told Narad that after getting married with Maina, Himalaya enjoyed a happy married life for a long time.

Once, lord Vishnu paid a visit to his place, accompanied by all the deities. Himalaya was very pleased by his arrival. After making salutations, he asked for the purpose of their visit.

The deities revealed to them that very soon the incarnation of Sati - Parvati is going to take birth.

"Therefore, O Himalaya! be prepared for that glorious occasion." Said the deities.

Himalaya was very pleased at this news. The deities started invocating Uma.

5.2.66 Goddess Uma Consoles the Deities

Being pleased by the invocation made by the deities Goddess Uma assured the deities about her arrival in this world. She told that her incarnation would take place in the house of Himalaya and by the virtues of her tremendous penance she would get lord Shiva as her husband. She also told the deities that she was satisfied by the service of Maina, done to her in the previous life. After being assured the deities went back satisfied.

5.2.67 Maina and Himalya Commence Penance

Himalaya and Maina commenced their penance with the objective of getting Uma as their daughter. Maina did a tremendous penance which lasted for twenty-seven years.

Goddess uma became very pleased by her penance. She appeared before her and asked her to demand anything she wished for. Maina expressed her desire of having one hundred valiant sons and a daughter, who would be worshipped by the people in all the three world.

Goddess Uma blessed her by saying Tathastu. Maina narrated this incident to her husband Himalaya. He became very pleased. In due course of time one hundred sons were born t o Maina. One of the sons was Mainak who possessed supreme qualities. Due to some reasons, Indra had severed the wings of Mainak's ninety-nine brothers, but by taking the refuge of ocean Mainak was able to survive the assault of Indra's Vajra.

5.2.68 Birth of Parvati

Himalaya and Maina engaged themselves in the worship of Shiva and Shakti, day and night. After some days Parvati manifested herself by taking birth. After her birth the whole mountaneous region of Himalaya became illuminated by her radiance.

5.2.69 Divine Childhood Plays of Parvati

After taking her birth, Parvati gradually started growing up. Varioua names given to her like Girja, Uma, and Jagdamba. Himalaya and Maina felt proud of their fate, which had made them the parents of an incarnation. Seeing the childhood plays of Uma, their hearts knew no bounds.

One day sage Narad arrived there Himalaya requested him to study the palm of Parvati, as he was curious to know about her future. After studying the lines of the palm, Narada predicted that Parvati was destined to be the wife of an entity, who would be beyond the reach of all the three qualities. He also revealed to them, that her husband would be devoid of any flaws and would be self born-Rudra.

Narad told Himalaya that to have Rudra as her husband, Parvati will have to accomplish great austerities and penance. Narad then went away.

5.2.70 The Dreams of Parvati and Himalya

When Uma had attained the marriagable age, Maina requested her husband a suitable bridegroom for her. Himalya told her that the words of Narada would never go in vain hence Uma should be asked to do penance, so that she could have Rudra as her husband.

But Maina was disinclined in forcing her tender daughter - Parvati in to such hardhsips like penance. Parvati then told Maina about her dream, in which she had seen a brahmin instructing her to do penance in order to have Rudra as her husband.

Maina told Himalaya about Parvati's dream. Himalaya then revealed to Maina about his own dream, in which he had seen lord Shiva doing penance at Kailash mountain. He had tried to give Parvati to him (Shiva) was unwillingly to have her service. But Shiva ultimately changed his mind after being satisfied by Parvati's replies/

Himalaya said- "I saw in my dream that Parvati had pleased Shiva by her tremendous penance and ultimately both of hem got married. Maina was satisfied and waited eagerly for that auspicious moment.

5.2.71 The Birth of 'Bhaum'-Mars

Once, when the ganas of Shiva praised the glory of mother Sati, lord Shiva became overjoyed just like an ordinary human being. In his joy, he travelled all around the three world without any clothes on his body. He returned back to Kailash and went into meditation.

While he was engrossed in his Samadhi, three drops of perspiration originated from his forehead fell down on the earth. From those drops manifested a very beautiful infant, who was of reddish complexion and who had four arms.

Seeing the child lord Shiva became concerned about his upbringing. Right then, mother earth manifested and lord Shiva entrusted the job of child's upbringing. The child was brought up by mother earth with great love and care. The child was named 'Bhaum' as he was nurtured and brought up by 'Bhumi' (earth).

When the child grew up, he went to Kashi and did a tremendous penance to please lord Shiva Lord Shiva became pleased with him and blessed him by granting him 'Mangalloka', which was superior even to the 'Shukraloka'. The same 'Bhauma' is established in the solar system by the name of 'Mars.'

5.2.72 Shiva Arrives at Himalya

One day lord Shiva accompanied by his ganas like Bhringi, Nandi, etc, arrived at Himalaya, with the purpose of doing penance. When Parvati father Himalaya came to know about his arrival, he went to receive him. After he had made his

salutations to Shiva, he was instructed by Shiva to see that he is not disturbed while doing his penance.

Himalaya made all the necessary arrangements so that Lord Shiva could perform his penance without being disturbed. One day Himalaya arrived at the place where lord Shiva was doing his penance. Parvati too came along with him. Himalaya requested him to keep Parvati, so that she could be at his service. Lord Shiva declined to keep her with him, fearing her presence might cause hindrance in the path of his penance. Now, Himalaya became very concerned about his daughter's future and wandered whether Parvati would remain unmarried.

5.2.73 Conversation between Parvati & Shiva

When Parvati saw her father becoming worried by Shiva's response she decided to intervene. She said to lord Shiva-

"I am 'Prakriti' (Nature) and you are the 'Purusha' (almighty). You exist in the 'Sagun' form (with form) because of me. In my absence, you will find it impossible even to exist."

Lord Shiva was impressed by her knowledge. He allowed her to be present near her. Himalaya and Parvati became very pleased.

Parvati used to come daily at the place where lord Shiva was doing his penance. Her companions too used to come along. She used to engaged herself in the worship of lord Shiva with great devotion.

Though lord Shiva was very much impressed by her devotion, but he decided that he won't marry her until she has proved her mettle by her tremendous penance.

The deities were tormented by a demon named. Tarakasur. They went to lord Brahma to seek his help. Lord Brahma sends 'Kamadeva' to disturb the Samadhi of Shiva, so that being influenced by him Shiva married Parvati and ultimately kills Tarakasur.

This attempt of Brahma was unsuccessful. Shiva 'burnt' Kamadeva with the help of his third eye. Parvati, then redoubled her effort to attract the attention of Shiva by engaging herself in a tremendous penance.

5.2.74 The Birth of Vajrang

Narada was curious to know about Tarakasur. He asked Brahmaji to narrate his tale.

Brahmaji said-

"Kashyap-the son of Marichi, had thirteen wives Diti was the eldest among them. She was the mother of Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. Both her sons were killed by lord Vishnu in his incarnations of Nrisimha and Varaha respectively. Diti became very sad by the death of her sons.

After somtime she again became pregnant but the foetus was destroyed by Indra's weapon- Vajra in the womb itself. However Indra was not able to destroy the foetus completely, but was only successful in dividing the foetus into forty-nine parts. These forty-nine parts, later on became famous as 'Maraudganas'.

Again Diti gave birth of Vajrang, who was very valiant and brave. When he grew up, Diti ordered him to defeat the deities. With his mother's permission and blessings, Vajrang defeated the deities and held them captive. He fastened all the deities. With strings and himself became the king of heaven.

Seeing the pitable state of the deities I (brahma) went to Vajrang accompanied by Kashyap and requested him to free the deities. Vajrang agreed to free them but said he did not have any aspiration of becoming the king of heaven, he only wanted to teach a lesson to Indra.

Vajrang returned the heaven to the deities. Later on the married Varanji who had been created by me (Brahma). While Vajrang was of virtuous nature, Varangi was met."

5.2.75 Birth of Tarakasur and his Penance

Varangi gave birth to Tarakasur- the valiant and brave demon. During the time of his birth , the world was affected by inauspicious events like earthquakes, cyclones etc, His name Tarakasur was given by Kashyap.

After he grew up, Tarakasur went to Madhuvan to do penance. His tremendous penance scarred the deities. Becoming pleased by his penance, lord Brahma appeared before him and asked him to demand anything.

Tarakasur demanded two boons - there should be no man as powerful as him and except Shiva's son nobody should be able to kill him. Lord Brahma blessed him by saying 'Tathastu'.

After receiving the boons, Tarakasur returned back to Ronitpur and was crowned as the king by Shukracharya. He then defeated the deities and drove them out from the heaven. Now it came under the rule of the demons.

5.2.76 Tarakasur Relinquishes Heaven on the Advice of Lord Brahma

After being driven away from the heaven, the deities went to lord Brahma to seek his help. They asked him as to how they could get rid of this menace called Tarakasur.

Brahmaji revealed to the deities that Tarakasur could be killed only by such a person, whose parents are Shiva and Parvati. He also advised them to make efforts, so that Shiva agrees to marry Parvati.

Lord Brahma them went to 'Tarakasur' who had now become the king of heaven, and tried to convince him to return it back to the deities. Tarakasur agreed to relinquish the heaven and give it back to the deities. The deities went back to the heaven.

5.2.77 Kamadeva Sent to Lord Shiva

Lord Brahma told Narada that the deities decided to send Kamadeva to influence lord Shiva so that the marriage between him and Parvati is felicitated.

Indra called Kamadeva and told him that the demon king Tarakasur could be killed only by such a person who was the son of Shiva and Parvati. Indra instructed Kamadeva to arouse passion in lord Shiva, so that he agrees to marry Parvati.

Kamadeva, accompanied by his wife Rati went to lord Shiva to accomplish his mission.

5.2.78 Efforts of Kamadeva

After reaching the place where lord Shiva was engrossed in his meditation, Kamadeva made repeated attempts to arouse passion in the heart of lord Shiva, but his actions were no avail.

Right then, Kamadeva saw Parvati arriving accompanied by her companions. She was looking divine in her beauty. Just at that moment lord Shiva too had come out of his meditational trance. Kamadeva thought that it was the most appropriate moment to have a go.

Kamadeva struck lord Shiva with his 'Kamabana' which did have a deep impact on him. Lord Shiva was struck by the awesome beauty of Parvati and his heart became full of passion for her. But at the same time he was surprised at the sudden change in his behaviour. He realized that it was an act of Kamadeva.

5.2.79 Kamadeva Reduces to Ashes

Lord Shiva looked all around him. He saw kamadeva standing towards his left side, with a bow and arrows in his hands. Now he was fully convinceed that it was indeed an act of Kamadeva.

Kamadeva becameterrified, he started remembering god, but before the deities could come at his rescue the third eye of lord Shiva got opened and Kamadeva was reduced to ashes.

Parvati got scarred after seeing Lord Shiva in such a destruction anger. She went to her house along with her companions. Rati- the wife of Kamadeva wept unconsolably.

The deities arrived and consoled her by saying that by the grace of lord Shiva, her husband would be alive once again. After that the deities went near lord Shiva and did his worship. They told him that it was not the fault of Kamadeva, as he had acted in accordance with the aspirations of the deities. They also told him the mystery of Tarakasur's death. The deities then requested him to make Kamadeva alive once again.

Lord Shiva told the deities that Kamadeva would take birth as the son of Krishna and Rukmini in the era of dwapar. A demon by the name of Shambar would throw him off in the sea. He would kill that demon and marry Rati, who too would be living in a city near the sea.

But the deities were not satisfied. They requested lord Shiva to help Rati to unite with her husband. Lord Shiva then told them that Kamadeva would become his gana, but he also warned them against revealing this fact to anybody. Rati then went to the city where the demon Shambar was expected to appear in the era of dwapar. The deities too went back to the heaven.

5.2.80 The Anger of Shiva Subsides

Lord Shiva's anger did not subside after the death of Kamadeva and the whole world started to feel the wrath of lord Shiva's fury. All the living creatures became terrified. They went to lord Brahma and prayed to him, to save them from Shiva's wrath.

Lord Brahma went to lord Shiva and conveyed their request to him. Lord Shiva agreed to relinquish his anger. Lord Brahma then carried Shiva's 'fury' to the sea and went to the sea. He requested the sea to posses it until the final annihilation. The sea agreed to do this. This way Lord Shiva's fury entered into the sea and all the living creatures felt a sign of relief.

5.2.81 Narada Preaches Parvati

When Parvati reached her home, she became very sad as she was unable to bear the sorrow of Shiva's separation. Sage Narada arrived there. Her father Himalaya narrated the whole story to him

Sage Narada then gave the five lettered mantra - **"OM NAMAH SHIVAJ'** to her and he also instructed her to do penance. Parvati heart was filled up with new enthusiasm.

5.2.82 Parvati does Penance

After taking the permission of her parents and relinquishing all of her ornaments and royal apparels, Parvati went to the same place where Lord Shiva himself had done penance. This sacred place was situated at the Himalayas,

from where the holy Ganges originated. Parvati companions too had accompanied her.

Parvati commenced her penance which gradually became severer day by day. She did penance for three thousand years by chanting the five lettered mantra- OM NAMAH SHIVAY and performing other kinds of austerities. Becoming impressed by her tremendous penance even the deities flocked to see her. Parvati did her penance, surrounded by fire on all her sides during summer. In rainy season she did her penance without any shelter and during winter she used to do penance by immersing herself in neck deep water.

5.2.83 The Deities go to Lord Shiva

Parvati's power created such heat in the atmosphere that the whole world started to burn. All the deities & sages went to lord Brahma and told him about the effects, Parvati's penance was having on all the three worlds.

Lord Brahma accompanied by all of them went to Vishnuji. They visited the place where Parvati was doing her penance. They realized that lord Shiva was the only remedy and hence all of them went to lord Shiva and made salutations to him.

5.2.84 Salutations Gives His Approval

Lord Shiva enquired about the purpose of their arrival. Lord Vishnu then revealed to him that how distressed and tormented were the deities by the activities of the demon - Tarakasur.

He also told Shiva that he could be killed by such a person, who is born out of the parentage of Shiva and Parvati. Lord Vishnu then told Shiva about Parvati's penance.

Initially lord Shiva refused to comply with their request but when the deities continued with their insistence, he ultimately gave his conscent. The deities became very pleased.

5.2.85 Parvati’s Love for Shiva Tested by the Sapta-Rishis

After the deities went back, lord Shiva summoned the Saptarishis (Vashishth etc) and instructed them to test Parvati's love for him. The Saptarishis went to Parvati and tested her resolve to marry lord Shiva. They tried to deter her by all means, but Parvati was firm in her resolve. They went back to lord Shiva and narrated the whole story.

5.2.86 Lord Shiva Tests Parvati

Lord Shiva then himself went to Parvati in the guise of a brahmin. Parvati on seeing a brahmin welcomed her with full honour.

Shiva asked Parvati as to why was she doing penance. Parvati told him that she wanted to have Shiva as her husband. Lord Shiva, who was in the guise of a brahmin started cursing Shiva to see how Parvati reacted to it.

Parvati replied that inspite of her penance Shiva did not appear, so she has decided to give up her life in burning pyre. After saying like this Parvati requested the Brahmin to go back and she herself entered into the burning pyre but remained unharmed Lord Shiva was very pleased to see her firm resolve and devotion. He again asked her as to what was the purpose behind doing such a tremendous penance.

5.2.87 Parvati’s Reply

Parvati told the brahmin; who in reality was Shiva himself that, she wanted to have Shiva as her husband at any cost. She said-

"You say that lord Shiva does not possess anything - not even wealth. He does not put on clothes on his body. You also say that he is not fit to be a bridegroom of me. But all of your utterances prove your mean intelligence."

5.2.88 Shiva Reveals his True Identity

Parvati continuing with her statements said that Shiva was the most capable deity in all the three world. "There is no sin greater than condemning Shiva." Said Parvati.

As Shiva, who was in the guise of Brahmin was about to say something Parvati said to one of her companion-

"This condemner should be killed, if this is not possible then we must leave this place at once."

As she was about to leave that place, lord Shiva revealed his true identity and by holding her hand said- "You have been my wife since time immemorial where are you going?"

Parvati became very pleased and her heart was filled up with extreme joy. She requested him to take to her father regarding their marriage. Lord Shiva agreed. He went back to Kailash mountain and narrated the whole story to his Ganas - Nandi, Bhairav etc. Everyone became very happy and awaited eagerly for the day Shiva would marry Parvati.

5.2.89 Shiva Demands Parvati as his Consort

Parvati, after successfully accomplishing her penance came back to her home. Everybody was happy at her arrival.

After sometime Himalaya went out to take his bath in the river Ganges. Meanwhile lord Shiva arrived in his appearance of Nataraj and started dancing in front of Parvati's mother - Maina. She was so pleased by his dance that she

wanted to present jewels to him in appreciation, but Shiva refused to take them. He expressed his desire to marry Parvati, which made Maina furious.

In the meantime, Himalaya arrived and she informed him what Shiva had said. He became angry too and ordered his attendants to drive away Nataraj (Shiva) from that place. Shiva then showed his divine appearance due to which Himalaya had the vision of Lord Vishnu and Parvati sitting by the side of lord Shiva in him. Himalaya was very surprised.

Lord Shiva again demanded Parvati to be made as his consort, but Himalaya in his ignorance again refused it. Nataraj then returned back to his abode.

After Shiva went back, Himalaya had a feeling that perhaps it was lord Shiva himself, who had arrived in the appearance of Nararaj. He realized what a grave blunder had been committed. Because of their guilt consciousness, both Maina and Himalaya felt the germination of devotion in their heart.

5.2.90 Shiva's Delusionary Power

Indra and the other deities became afraid when they saw both Himalaya and Maina having deep devotion towards lord Shiva. They apprehended that if Himalaya happily agrees to marry Parvati with Shiva, then he would no longer live on the earth- He would attain salvation. His departure would make the earth devoid of jewels and other kinds of wealth.

To prevent this from happening, they went to Vrihaspati and requested him to influence Himalayas mind by condemning Shiva. But Vrihaspati refused to comply.

The deities then went to lord Brahma and made the same request. Brahma refused to meet their demand.

Now the deities went to lord Shiva and requested him not to marry Parvati as it would make the earth devoid of all kinds of wealth. Lord Shiva feeling pity agreed to help them.

Lord Shiva went to Himalaya in the guise of a hermit and started cursing himself (Shiva). Maina was deeply influenced by the hermits word and decided not to marry Parvati with Shiva. She also threatened to give up her life along with Parvati. If Parvati was married with Shiva against her wish.

5.2.91 Shiva Instructs Sapta-Rishis to Convince Maina & Himalya

Lord Shiva summoned the Saptarishis and instructed them to convince Maina and Himalaya to marry Parvati with him, so that Tarakasur could be killed. He feared that his actions would have created many misconceptions in their minds.

The Saptarishis went to Himalaya and tried to make him, so that Tarakasur could be killed. He feared that his actions would have created many misconceptions in their minds.

The Saptarishis went to Himalaya and tried to make him understand that there was not any other way out than marrying Parvati with Shiva. They also warned both Himalaya and Maina if they did not give their conscent to marry Parvati with Shiva, then she would be forcibly abducted by him (Shiva), causing death and destruction to their whole clan. The Saptarishis then narrated the following story-

5.2.92 Anaranya, The King

There was a king named Anaranya, who belonged to the lineage of fourteenth Manu-Indrasavarni. He was a great devotee of lord Shiva. He had five queens from whom one hundred sons and a very beautiful daughter named Padma were born.

When Padma grew up, the king started looking for a suitable match. One day while Padma was taking her bath in the Bhadra river, sage Pippalada arrived there. He became enchanted by Padma's beauty.

After gathering informations about her from the people, he went to king Anaranya and expressed his wish to marry Padma. He threatened him of dire consequences if she was not married to her.

Anaranya became frightened and gave his daughter to him. Sage pippalada happily went away accompanied by Padma. But both the king and the queen went to the forest because of the sorrow of giving their young daughter to an old sage. The queen died because of her grief. The king, because of his deep devotion towards Shiva attained to the abode of Shiva.

5.2.93 Padma and Pippalad

On the request of Himalayas, Sage Vashishth who was one of the Saptarishis narrated the story of Padma the princess and sage Pippalad-

"At the time of his marriage sage Pippalad was old and weak, but still Padma devotely performed the duties of a faithful wife.

To test her faithfulness towards her husband, Dharmaraj arrived at the bank of that river where Padma was taking her bath. He was in the guise of a young and handsome prince. He coaxed Padma to leave behind her 'old husband' and come along with him. Padma became furious and cursed him. Dharmaraj became very pleased and revealed his true identity. He also asked as to how the effects of her curse could be nullified.

Padma told her that his sins would result in having four legs during the era of Satya, but they reduced to three during the era of treta, which would again

reduced to two legs during the era of Dwapar and ultimately he would have only one leg during the era of Kali. Padma also told her that even his single leg would disappear during the ending phase of Kali. "This would apropriately act as an atonement for your sins." - said Padma.

Dharmaraj blessed her by saying that she would have ten sons and also that her husband would possess youth and long life for eternity.

After listening to this story. Himalaya agreed to marry Parvati with Shiva. The Saptarishis then went back to lord Shiva and gave the good news to him.

5.2.94 Himalya Sends Lagna-Patrika

Himalaya then requested sage Garga to prepare a beautiful Lagna-Patrikas which were then sent to his near and dear ones. He then requested Vishwakarma to construct a beautiful 'mandap' for the marriage, which was constructed by him in a very short time.

5.2.95 Lord Shiva Invites the Deities

Lord Shiva invited all of his Ganas to the marriage ceremony. He also instructed sage Narada to intimate all the deities, sages and the celestial entities.

After getting the invitation from Shiva everybody started making preparations to be a part of Shiva's marriage-procession. The seven mothers- Brahmi, Maheshwari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Aindri and Chamunda dressed him up beautifully Shiva then performed all the necessary Karmas to pacify the planet. At last this wonderful marriage-procession of Shiva proceeded towards the in-laws house.

5.2.96 Lord Shiva’s Marriage Procession

Shiva proceeded with his marriage procession which considered of crores of his 'Ganas' and deities like Vishnu who were boarded on their vehicles. Even Narad and Lord Brahma were present in his (Shiva's) marriage procession.

First of all, Shiva sent Narada to Himalaya's house to inform him about their (marriage procession) arrival. Himalaya sent his son-Mainak to receive them.

5.2.97 Shiva Divine Plays

When Maina saw that the marriage procession was coming she curiously told Narad about her desire to see her son in law.

Shiva understood the arrongance which her desire contained. He wanted to teach her a lesson. He sent all the deities one by one. Maina mistook each one of them to be Shiva, but was later informed by Narada that in fact they were not Shiva but the attendants of Shiva.

Maina was very delighted and wondered how handsome the master (Shiva) must be, if the attendants were so handsome. Right then Shiva arrived with his

Ganas - His body coated with ashes on it. His Ganas too were looking ferocious. Maina could not bear this horrible sight and lost her consciousness.

5.2.98 Maina's Wail

The maid servants arrived instantaneously and helped Maina to regain her consciousness. She started crying and cursing everybody. She thought was responsible for her daughter's marriage with Shiva. Nobody was spared- Narad, the Saptarishis and even her own sons. She even admonished Parvati by saying.

"Did you do severe penance to get such a horrible husband like this (Shiva)?"

Lord Brahma and Narad tried to console and convince her, but it was of no avail. When Himalaya tried to intervene, he was soundly rebuked. Maina threatened him that if this marriage took place then it would be the last day of her life.

At last lord Vishnu arrived and tried to pacify her anger by saying that her anger was baseless as she had not seen the real appearance of Shiva, which bestows benediction. Lord Vishnu and Narad then eulogised Shiva who on being pleased showed his most enchanting beauty.

Maina now became fully satisfied. Himalaya too felt proud of her daughter's good fortune. At last Shiva entered the Mandap (canopy) where marriage ceremony was going to be organised. He saw Parvati sitting there. Both of them were very delighted to see each other.

5.2.99 Himalya Bestows Parvati to Shiva

After the marriage ceremony was over, Sage Garg helped Himalaya in performing the rite of Kanyadan, amidst the chantings of vedic mantras. The women's were singing auspicious songs. Himalaya presented large quantities of dowry to Shiva. Parvati's companions were engaged with Shiva in jocular and humorous conversation.

5.2.100 Shiva Brings Back Kamadeva Alive

Rati- the wife of Kamadeva, seeing the moment opportune, arrived and requested Shiva to bring back her dead husband back to life. Her wailings made the other goddesses very sympathetic towards her. They too requested Shiva to make her dead husband back to life.

Feeling pity on her condition. Shiva brought back Kamadeva back to life from the ashes which Rati had given to him. On seeing her husband alive, Rati's heart was filled up with extreme joy. Both of them eulogised lord Shiva and expressed their gratitude.

After the marriage ceremony was over the marriage-processionist sought the permission of Himalaya to make a move, but he requested them to remain there for some more days.

5.2.101 Shiva's Departure

Shiva remained at his in-laws house for many days. One day he sought the permission of Himalaya to go back. Everybody became sad at the prospect of Shiva's departure. Especially Maina who was very saddened by this news. At last it was time for Shiva to depart for Kailash, accompanied by Parvati.

Lord Shiva and Parvati were blissfully enjoying their martial status, unaware of the eagerness with which the deities were awaiting the arrival of their progeny.

Tarakasur - the demon continued tormenting the deities. When their miseries became unbearable they went to lord Brahma to seek their help. All of them then went to lord Vishnu. They told him that even after passing of such a long duration of time, Parvati and Shiva had not yet become parents. They requested lord Vishnu to remind Shiva about the purpose behind his marriage.

Initially lord Vishnu showed his disinclination to disturb Shiva's martial bliss, but when the deities insisted he went to Shiva accompanied by all of them. All of them eulogised Shiva and Parvati. The deities then requested Shiva to make his contribution in the destruction of Tarakasur.

Shiva understood everything. Some drops of his semen fell down on the ground. One being insisted by the deities. Agni transformed his appeared in the form of a pigeon and pecked up those drops of semen.

Right then Parvati arrived there and became extremely furious on seeing the semen going waste. She cursed the deities that their respective wives would remain issue less as the consequences of their mindless acts.

Agni was having inflammation in his stomach because of the Shiva's semen. Lord Shiva advised him to transfer it into the womb of any noble woman. Agni followed the instruction and injected the semen into the body of six women through the pores of the hair on their body.

Those women could not bear the extreme luster of the Shiva's semen. They went to Himachal and evacuated it. Even Himachal could not bear its extreme effulgence and immersed it into the flowing Ganga. River Ganga carried it with her current and established it amidst bushes of reed (Sarkanda). Instantaneously a beautiful child manifested from it. His birth made all the deities extremely joyous including Shiva and Parvati. It was the sixth day (bright half of the lunar month) of the hindu month of Margashirsha. He was Kartikeya.

5.2.102 Kartikeya

Sage Vishwamitra arrived at the spot where the child had manifested. On the repeated insistence of the child, Vishwamitra performed his purification rites and named him 'Guha'.

The divine child blessed Vishwamitra and bestowed divine knowledge to him. He also blessed him to become famous as 'Brahmarshi'. Agnideva arrived there and gave a divine weapon named 'Shakti' to that child. Guha went to the Kroncha mountain and banged his weapon on it. The mountain could not bear the effect of the blow and started crumbling down. Innumerable demons living on that mountain came to kill him. But the child killed all of them by his weapon.

When Indra heard about his bravery, he came along with other deities to fight him Indra assaulted Guha with his Vajra on the right side of his body, which resulted into the manifestation of a very powerful entity named 'Shakh'. Indra again assaulted him on the left side of his body, from which manifested an extremely powerful entity named 'Vishakh'. Indra assaulted Guha for the third time- this time his chest was the target. From this third blow of Indra manifested 'Naigam'.

Guha accompanied by all the three powerful entities- Shakh, Vishakh and Naigam attacked Indra and his army, but they fled away.

Six goddesses arrived on the scene. All of them tried to feed that small child out of affection. They started quarelling among themselves. Right then they were surprised to see the child appearing with six head. Now their problems were solved. Each of the goddesses fed their breast milk to the child. They took Guha with them and brought him up with great love and care. Guha later on became famous as Kartikeya.

5.2.103 Search for Kartikeya

One day, Parvati curiously asked Shiva about his semen which had fallen on the ground. Lord Shiva summoned the deities and asked them about it. The deities narrated the whole story. Both Shiva and Parvati were very pleased to know about Kartikeya.

Lord Shiva then ordered his Ganas to bring Kartikeya from the possession of Kritika. The Ganas reached Badrikasharam where Kritika lived. When Kritika saw the Ganas she became very frightened but Kartikeya gave him solace. The Ganas requested Kartikeya to come along with him.

Kartikeya happily took permission from his mothers and proceeded to meet Shiva and Parvati.

5.2.104 Kartikeya’s Coronation

At the time or Kartikeya's departure, the mothers had become very emotional. Kartikeya consoled them. He then boarded the beautiful chariot which had been sent by Parvati and proceeded towards Kailash mountain.

All the deities including Shiva were eagerly awaiting his arrival. When Kartikeya reached Kailash mountain, he was given a royal reception. The whole

atmosphere was filled up with joy. Everybody was celebrating. Each of the deities presented him their respective weapons to him.

Lord Shiva coronated him as the king with the help of the brahmin. This way he had now become the lord of Kailashpuri.

5.2.105 Kartikeya's Amazing Character

Kartikeya narrated a story connected with himself:-

"One day a brahmin, whose name was Narad came to me and requested me to help him find his he-goat which had got lost. He told me that the goat was supposed to be offered as the sacrifice.

"If the goat was not found, my vow would remain unfulfilled." Said Narad

I went in search of that goat. I found it in the Vishnuloka where it was creating nuisance . When the goat saw me, it tried to attack me with its sharp horns. I climbed on its back. After travelling through all the three worlds, the goat returned back to his original place. I climbed down from its back.

Narada arrived and demanded his goat. I told him that his Yagya had been accomplished by my blessings and there was no need to sacrifice the poor goat. Narada - the brahmin went back satisfied.

5.2.106 The Battle

The deities were very encouraged by the presence of Kartikeya amidst themselves. They were beaming with confidence and enthusiasm. The deities assembled at the seashore. Tarakasur arrived their with his huge army. The battle began.

Tarakasur appeared to be invincible. His blow was so severe that Indra fell down unconscious. All the 'Lokpalas' met the same fate. After that Tarakasur fought with Veerbharda and made him unconscious. Even Lord Vishnu could not sustain for long and was ultimately defeated.

Lord Brahma requested Kartikeya to fight with Tarakasur as nobody except him would be able to kill him.

5.2.107 Killing of Tarakasur

On being instructed by lord Brahma Kartikeya came forward to fight with Tarakasur. Tarakasur ridiculed the deities for taking the shield of a small child.

"If he gets killed by me, the responsibility should lie on you." Thundered Tarakasur.

A fierce battle started between both of them in which both of them got injured. At last seeing an opportune moment, Kartikeya hit Tarakasur on his chest with his weapon- Shakti. The blow proved to be fatal and as a result Tarakasur died.

Kartikeya feat was hailed by all the deities. After killing Tarakasur, Kartikeya went to mother Parvati, who affectionately took him into her lap. He was eulogized by all the deities.

5.2.108 Killings of Pralamb & Banasur

The mountain - Kraunch, who was tormented by the activities of the demon named Banasur, went to Kartikeya and narrated his woeful tales.

Kartikeya threw his weapon - Shakti in the direction which Banasur lived. The weapon banged right on target and returned back to him. Bamnasur was burnt to ashes. Kraunch went back being very pleased. The mountain - Kraunch established three Shivalingas to please lord Shiva. The names of these three Shivalingas were - Kumareshwar, Pratigyeshwar and Kapaleshwar.

Once upon a time, the deities were trying to reach the abode of Lord Shiva- Kailash mountain. Their preceptor Vrihaspati was walking ahead of all of them. Meanwhile a demon by the name of Pralamb started creating turbulence. After being tormented by his activities, Kumud - son of Sheshnag took Kartikeya's refuge. Kartikeya killed the demon with his divine weapon - Shakti.

5.2.109 Ganesh

Once Narada had a desire to listen to the tales of Ganesha. Brahmaji replied-

"There were various Ganeshas in different Kalpas. During the period of 'Shweta-Kalp', Ganesha was born to Shiva and Parvati, when they went to Kailash mountain shortly after their marriage.

"Once while going to take her bath, Parvati instructed Nandi, to stand guard at the entrance and not to allow anybody to enter the premise without her permission. Lord Shiva arrived there by chance. Despite of Nandi's refusal to allow him, in he went inside. Parvati did not like this.

One day it happened so that Once again, Parvati wanted to take her bath. She made an idol from the dirt of her body. She made the idol alive and instructed him not to allow anybody without her permission. She also gave him a stick for his protection.

Incidentally lord Shiva arrived once again. He tried to enter inside but Ganesha refused to let him go inside. But when Shiva tried to go inside forcibly, Ganesha hit him with his stick. Lord Shiva became furious and ordered his ganas to kill him.

5.2.110 Ganesha Defeats The Shivaganas & The Deities

The ganas of Shiva attacked Ganesha but all of them were no match for him. After being defeated by Ganesha, the Shivaganas went to Shiva and narrated everything.

While the Shivaganas were narrating their stories, Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and some other deities arrived there. Lord Brahma then went to Ganesha to convince him, but as soon as Ganesha saw him he tried to attack lord Brahma. Brahmaji came back without achieving anything. After this lord Shiva himself came to fight Ganesha.

5.2.111 Shiva Severes Ganesh's Head

A fierce battle was fought between Shiva and Ganesha. When Lord Shiva realized that Ganesha was dominating the fight, he severed his head with his trishul.

5.2.112 Ganesh Becomes Alive

Parvati became extremely furious at the death of Ganesha. Her anger resulted into the manifestation of innumerable goddesses, who started creating havoc on the deities.

The deities became frightened and they were forced to take the refuge of Parvati. They eulogized her and requested to be pardoned. Parvati told them that they could be saved only when Ganesha becomes alive and becomes worshippable just like thee (Deities).

The deities went to lord Shiva and requested him to make Ganesha alive once again. Lord Shiva instructed them to go in the northern direction and bring the head of any creature they might find and join it with the trunk of Ganesha. The deities followed the instruction and went in the northern direction.

They found an elephant which had only one tusk. They severed the elephant's head and joined it with the trunk of Ganesha. By the blessings of Shiva, Ganesha became alive once again. The deities worshipped Ganesha and returned back to their respective abodes.

5.2.113 Ganesha's Marriage

Both Kartikeya and Ganesha grew up to become handsome youths in due course of time. Shiva and Parvati started to think about their marriage.

When Ganesha and Kartikeya came to know about the plan of their marriage both of them started quarreling among themselves as to who should get married first.

Lord Shiva and Parvati devised a plan to sort out this problem. They told them that whoever between them return after circumambulating the earth, will get married first of all.

Kartikeya and Ganesha agreed. Kartikeya proceeded on his journey to circumambulate the earth. Ganesha was very intelligent. He requested his parents - Lord Shiva and Parvati; to sit at a place together and circumambulated them for seven times and said-

"According to Veda, Circumambulating one's parents give virtues equivalent to that of circumambulating the whole earth. So now you must get me married first."

Lord Shiva and Parvati were very impressed by his intelligence. They decided to get him married with Siddhi and Riddhi-the daughter of Vishwaroop Prajapati. In due course of time two sons were born to them Kshem and Labh.

While Kartikeya was returning after circumambulating the whole earth, he met sage Narad on the way. He told Kartikeya about Ganesha's marriage. Kartikeya became very sad and felt like having been cheated by their parents.

When Kartikeya reached Kailash mountain he made salutations to lord Shiva and Parvati and without saying anything, went to Kraunch mountain to do his penance.

Parvati was very sad. She went to Kraunch mountain to meet Kartikeya accompanied by Shiva. When Kartikeya saw them coming he moved to another place. Lord Shiva and Parvati followed him and ultimately met him. Both these places have religious significance. Having a darshan of Kartikeya on the full moon day of Kritika nakashatra is considered to bestows immense auspicious and destroyes all the sins of a man.

5.2.114 Yudh-Khand: Tripurasur- The Three Demon

Narada requested lord Brahma to narrate how lord Shiva annihilated the demons. Lord Brahma narrated the tale of Tripurasur.

"After the killing of Tarakasur, three of his sons started doing their penance. The eldest among them was Tarkasha, younger to him was Viddyunmali and Kamalaksha was the youngest. I (Brahma) became very pleased by their tremendous penance."

"They requested me to create three invincible forts for them, which should be full of all kinds of wealth and splendour and which nobody could be able to break."

"A golden fort was constructed for Taraksha; for Kamlaksha a fort of silver was constructed and for Viddyunmali iron-fort was constructed. I had ordered the demon named Maya to construct these forts. One of these forts was constructed in the sky, the other was constructed on the earth and the third was constructed in the nether world."

"After constructing the forts for them Maya took the responsibility of protecting them. I (Brahma) warned the three demons that they would be killed by lord Shiva. After this I came back."

5.2.115 The Deities Eulogize Shiva & Vishnu

The three demon-brothers started tormenting the deities. The deities went to lord Brahma and narrated about their miseries. Lord Brahma instructed them to seek the help of Shiva.

They went to lord Shiva and explained about their woes. They also requested Shiva to eliminate those three demons. Lord Shiva instructed them to go to lord Vishnu and said-

"The Tripurasurs are very virtuous so they could not be killed. You all must go to lord Vishnu and try to seek his help."

The deities then went to lord Vishnu and made the same request. Lord Vishnu performed an oblation. Thousands of armed spirit appeared from the yagya-kunda. Lord Vishnu sent these spirits to kill the three demon-brothers. But these spirits were no match for the Tripurasurs might and they had to run for their lives. They came to lord Vishnu and narrated the whole story. Lord Vishnu became very worried. He sent back all the deities and started thinking about the means, Tripurasurs could be killed.

5.2.116 Emergence of Atheism

Lord Vishnu came to the conclusion that the Tripurasurs could not be killed till they remain Virtuous and religious. He then created an illusionary entity from his body who had no hairs on his head. He had worn dirty clothes and a bag was hanging down his shoulder. He also had a broom in his head.

The entity asked lord Vishnu about the purpose of his existence and his name. Lord Vishnu told him that his name was Arihan. He also instructed him to create a scripture which stresses upon the importance of action (Karmavad0 and which is different from the rituals explained in the Vedas. Lord Vishnu specifically instructed him to keep the language of that scripture as simple and degenerated as possible.

Lord Vishnu then preached Arihan on the science of illusion which stressed that the heaven or the hell does not exist anywhere else, but on this earth itself.

Lord Vishnu instructed Arihan to get Tripurasurs initiated into with this philosophy so that the demon-brothers become irreligious. Vishnu ordered Arihan to make his residence in a desert with his disciples.

"You should propagate your philosophy when Kaliyuga arrives" - said Lord Vishnu.

After giving his instruction lord Vishnu disappeared. Arihan then created four illusionary entities from his bein who were supposed to act as his followers. Their names were Rishi, Yati, Keerya and Upadhyay.

Now the time had arrived to enter the forts of Tripurasurs. All of them entered the forts and in a gradual manner started increasing their influence. As a result the Tripurasurs became irreligious. Not only that their subjects too became irreligious in a very short time.

5.2.117 The Deities Eulogize Lord Shiva

When the deities saw that the Tripurasurs had become irreligious completely, they went to lord Shiva and requested him to kill Tripurasurs. Right then mother Parvati arrived there accompanied by Kartik and Ganesha. She requested Shiva to come along with her into the palace. All the deities followed them and kept on requesting. The deities were angry that Parvati had caused obstacles in the fulfillment of their objective. They could not conceal their anger and expressed it.

One of the ganas of Shiva, whose name was Kumbhodar angrily attacked the deities. All of them got injured and went to lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu advised them to chant the five lettered mantra - **OM NAMAH SHIVAY** for one crore times. The deities followed the instruction. Lord Shiva became pleased and appeared before them. He assured the deities that their wishes would be fulfilled.

5.2.118 Killings of Tripurasurs

When Shiva agreed to kill the demon - brothers Tripurasur the deities became extremely joyous. They gave their respective weapons to Shiva, so that he did not have any difficulty in killing the demons. Vishwakarma gave his beautiful chariot to him.

Lord Shiva proceeded towards the forts of Tripurasur followed by a huge army of the deities. His army entered the forts of his bow but he was not able to release it. He remained in this position for one thousand years but still he was not successful in releasing his arrow.

Lord Shiva then worshipped Ganesha and heard a heavenly voice instructing him to use his weapon - Pashupat. Lord Shiva released it in the direction of the forts of Tripurasur. All the three forts were destroyed by the assault of Pashupat and it created havoc among the demons.

Seeing death and destruction all around them - Tripurasurs prayed to lord Shiva to have mercy on them. Lord Shiva assured them that after their death they would be born as his ganas. At last Tripurasurs were burnt to death. Maya was the only demon who survived. After their death the Tripurasurs were privileged to be reborn as the ganas of Shiva.

5.2.119 The Deities Receive a Boon from Shiva

After the killings of three demons- Tripurasur, lord Shiva's anger had still not subdivided. The anger was pacified only after the deities and the sages prayed to him. He blessed the deities by saying that he would always be present on their side to protect them.

Maya - Who had survived the Shiva's attack, arrived there and he too was blessed by lord Shiva. After that Arihan arrived with his followers and worshipped Shiva. Lord Shiva blessed him and his followers. After taking permission from lord Vishnu, Arihan proceeded towards a desert region accompanied by his followers. After receiving the boon the deities too received to their respective abode.

5.2.120 Lord Shiva Spares The Life of Indra

Sutji narrates the following story to the sages-

"Once upon a time, Indra was going towards Kailash mountain to have a 'darshan' of lord Shiva. Sage Vrihaspati was accompanying him.

Lord Shiva came to know about his arrival. He wanted to test his devotion towards him. While both Indra and Vrihaspati were still on their way. Lord Shiva met them on their in the guise of a hermit.

Indra did not recognize Shiva, who was sitting on the way disguised as a hermit. Indra inquired as to who he was and where he live. Lord Shiva sat quietly without saying a word. Indra repeatedly asked the same question, but each time Shiva remained quiet. Indra became furious and tried to attack lord Shiva with his Vajra.

Lord Shiva paralyzed the raised hands of Indra by his divine power. Shiva's eyes had reddened due to anger which made Indra very frightened sage Vrihaspati was able to recognize the real identity of the hermit as to who he was. He made salutations to lord Shiva and requested him to pardon Indra. Lord Shiva became pleased and diverted the power of his radiant eyes to the ocean. This way Indra's life was spared by Shiva. Lord Shiva then returned to Kailash mountain. Indra and Sage Vrihaspati to Kailash mountain. Indra and sage Vrihaspati too returned to their respective abodes.

5.2.121 Manifestation of Jaladhar

The effulgence, which had been divided by lord Shiva into the Ocean resulted into the manifestation of a small child. This incident happened at the place where river Ganges submerged into the ocean and which is also known as Gangasagar now a days.

The child was crying so ferociously that an environment of fear was created everywhere. The deities and the sages went to lord Brahma to satisfy their

curiously. Lord Brahma assured then to find out the reason. He went to the seashore. The sea put the child in his lap and enquired about the name of that child and also about his future.

Meanwhile the child pressed lord Brahma's neck with such power that tears rolled down from his eyes. For this reason he named the child as Jalandhar. Lord Brahma told the sea that the child will become the mighty ruler of the demons. No deity would be able to kill him except Shiva.

The sea was very pleased by lord Brahma's predictions. After Lord Brahma returned to his abode, the sea brought that child to his home and brought up that child with great love and care.

When Jalandhar grew up he married Vrinda, who was the daughter of Kalnemi. Later on he became the ruler of the demons.

5.2.122 Battle Between Jalandhar & The Deities

One day Sage Bhrigu came to meet Jalandhar. After receiving him with due respect Jalandhar asked him as to who severed the head of Rahu.

Sage Bhrigu then told him about Hiranyakashipu who was the maternal uncle of Rahu. Sage Bhrigu also told him about Virochana - the son of the extremely charitable king Bali. Then sage Bhrigu narrated the tale connected with the churning of ocean and how ambrosia emerged from the churning of the ocean.

Sage Bhrigu told Jalandhar how Rahu's head was severed by lord Vishnu, while he was sitting among the deities and at the time when ambrosia was being distributed to all the deities.

Jalandhar became very furious after hearing this story. He summoned one of his messengers whose name was Ghasmar and instructed him to go and ask Indra, as to why had he misappropriated all the wealth of his father (Sea) which emerged during the churning of Sea. He also instructed Ghasmar to warn Indra about the dire consequences unless he takes his (Indra's) refuge.

But Indra sent back Ghasmar without any specific assurance. This action of Indra made Jalandhar more angry than before. He collected his army and attacked Indra.

A fierce battle was fought between his army and the army of the deities. Many warriors got killed from both the sides. Shukracharya the guru of the deities brought back the dead warriors from the demon side back to life by his mritasanjivani vidya. Similarly Sage Vrihaspati brought back the dead warriors from the deities side back to life with the help of medicinal herbs.

When Shukracharya saw that, sage Vrihaspati too was successfully making the dead deities alive, he instructed Jalandhar to submerge the Drongiri mountain

into the sea, so that it becomes impossible for Vrihaspati to get the medicinal herbs by the help of which he made the dead deities alive.

Jalandhar obeyed the command of Shukracharya and by lifting the Drongiri mountain submerged it into the sea. The deities became demoralized and fled from the battle field Jalandhar captured Indrapuri.

5.2.123 Battle Between Lord Vishnu & Jalandhar

The terrified deities took the refuge of lord Vishnu and sought his help. Lord Vishnu gave a patient hearing and agreed to help them, but there was a hitch. His consort goddess Laxmi considered Jalandhar as her brother because both of them originated from the sea. She instructed Lord Vishnu against killing Jalandhar.

Lord Vishnu promised to her that he won't kill Jalandhar. After giving his word to goddess Laxmi, he went to fight a battle with Jalandhar.

A fierce battle was fought between both of them which remained indecisive till the end. Lord Vishnu became very much impressed by the valiance of Jalandhar and asked him to demand any boon he liked.

Jalandhar requested him to make his dwelling in the Ksheersagar-the abode of Jalandhar, alongwith his sister (Laxmi). Lord Vishnu agreed to fulfill his wish and started living in the Ksheersagar along with his consort Laxmi.

Being undefeated by Lord Vishnu himself, Jalandhar became the ruler of all the three world. All his subjects were satisfied by his just and virtuous rule, except the deities. The deities now eulogized lord Shiva to seek his help in defeating Jalandhar.

5.2.124 Narad’s Stratagem

According to the wish of lord Shiva, Sage Narad came to meet the deities. The deities narrated their woeful tales to him. Feeling pity on their condition, he went accorded a grand reception by Jalandhar which pleased him very much.

Narad praised the splendours and prosperity of Jalandhar but added that it was nothing in comparison to Shiva's splendours Narad told him that inspite of all his authority and splendours, his prosperity was still incomplete, as he did not have a consort. Jalandhar asked curiously as to where could he find his consort.

According to his strategy, Narada advised Jalandhar to make Parvati as his consort Jalandhar fell into Narad's trap. He sent 'Rahu' to lord Shiva with a proposal to part with Parvati. Rahu went to lord Shiva and demanded Parvati, which made lord Shiva extremely furious. His anger resulted into the manifestation of a ferocious creature, which ran towards 'Rahu' to devour him. Rahu had no option but to take the refuge of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva protected the life of 'Rahu'.

The hungry creature, asked Shiva as to what should he eat to satisfy his hunger. Lord Shiva instructed him to devour his own limbs. The creative followed his instructions and devoured his limbs. Lord Shiva was very pleased by his sense of obedience. He named that creature of his palace. He also blessed him saying that he too would be worshipped along with him (Shiva).

5.2.125 Battle Between Lord Shiva & Jalandhar

Rahu went back to Jalandhar and narrated the whole story to him. Jalandhar then attacked Kailash mountain with his huge army. A fierce battle was fought between the Shiva-ganas and the demons.

When Jalandhar realized that lord Shiva had begun to dominate the battle he created beautiful 'Apsaras' and 'Gandharvas' by his illusionary powers to divert the attention of lord Shiva and his ganas. He was successful in his attempt. Lord Shiva and his ganas became enchanted by the heavenly beauty of the apsaras. They stopped fighting and started watching their dance and music.

Meanwhile Jalandhar went to Parvati in the guise of lord Shiva but was recognized by her. Being enchanted by the beauty of goddess Parvati, he looked at her with his evil intentions, but was immobilized by her wrath.

Mother Parvati then went to lord Vishnu and narrated the whole story. She wanted to teach Jalandhar a lesson. She requested lord Vishnu to go to Jalandhar's wife in the guise of Jalandhar and act in the same way. Jalandhar had dared to do.

5.2.126 Vrinda Gets Dishonored

With the help of his divine powers, Lord Vishnu created many inauspicious dreams while Vrinda was asleep. Vrinda became very restless and when the anxieties become unbearable she proceeded towards the forest.

Vrinda saw a hermit in the forest who was preaching his disciples. The hermit was none other than lord Vishnu. She went to that hermit and prayed to save her husband's life.

Lord Vishnu disappeared from the scene and reappeared - this time in the guise of Jalandhar. But Vrinda was unable to recognize the real identity of her husband. She was very pleased after finding her husband. Both of them stayed in that very forest as husband and wife for a very long time.

One day, came to know about the real identity of the person, who was impersonating as her husband. Realizing that her chastity has been breached, she cursed lord Vishnu by saying that just as he had played a deceitful trick with her in the same way somebody would deceitfully abduct his wife and he too would wander in her search.

After cursing lord Vishnu, Vrinda embraced death by entering into the fire.

5.2.127 Killing of Jalandhar

On the other side, after the departure of Parvati from Kailash Mountain and after the illusionary powers created by Jalandhar had ended all the apsaras and gandharvas vanished. Shiva realized that whatever he was watching, was nothing more than illusion.

Lord Shiva recommenced his battle. The demons-Shumbh and Nishumbh, came forward to fight with him, but ultimately they had to flee from the battlefield. Lord Shiva warned both of them that though they had escaped death at that moment, but they would be killed by Parvati.

Now Jalandhar again arrived to fight with lord Shiva. A fierce battle commenced between them. Finding an opportune time, Shiva severed the head of Jalandhar by his 'Chakra' which had been created from his toe. After his death, Jalandhar's soul united with Shiva.

5.2.128 The Deities Express Gratitude

When the deities came to know about the killing of Jalandhar, they became overjoyed. They came to Lord Shiva and eulogized him. Thy also hailed his great achievement. After expressing their gratitude they returned to their respective abodes.

5.2.129 Manifestation of Amla (Myrobalan), Tulsi (~Basil) and Malti

Lord Vishnu was very much saddened by the death of Vrinda. He took the ashes from the pyre and after applying them on his body started wondering here and there.

The deities became very worried to see the condition of lord Vishnu. They went to lord Shiva and requested him to eliminate the false attachment with which Sri Vishnu was suffering.

Lord Shiva sent the deities to goddess Parvati, saying that she would ceratainly help in this regard.

The deities went to goddess Parvati and prayed to her. She became very pleased and with the assistance of Laxmi and Saraswati, gave some seeds to then. The deities sprayed those seeds on the pyre, on which Vrinda had given up her life. Three holy plants manifested from that pyre-Amla, Tulsi and Malti. Later on Tulsi and Malti attained to the Vishnuloka, by the virtue of their respective penance.

5.2.130 Birth of Shankhachuda

Sutji narrated the tale of the birth of Shankhachuda and how Shiva killed him with his Trishula. He told the sages that Shankhachuda was born to the demon

king 'Dambha'. Shankhachuda was in fact, Sudama, in his previous life. He was born in the family of demons due to the curse of Radha.

5.2.131 Shankhachuda's Marriage

When Shankhachuda gre up, he went to Pushkar (Ajmer, Rajasthan) and did a tremendous penance to please lord Brahma. Lord Brahma blessed him and said that he would remain invincible. He also instructed Shankhachuda to go to 'Badrikashram' where he would find his would be wife Tulsi- the daughter of Dharmadhwaja.

Shankhachuda went to Badrikasharam and married Tulsi as per the instructions of lord Brahma. He then returned back to his capital accompanied by his wife-Tulsi.

5.2.132 Shankhachuda Becomes the Ruler of All Three Worlds

When Shankhachuda reached his capital after marrying Tulsi, he was crowned as the king of the demons by Shukracharya. After his coronation, Shankhachuda attacked Indrapuri supported by his huge army and defeated the deities. In a very short time all the three worlds were under his control.

After being defeated by Shankhachuda, the deities went to lord Brahma and sought his help in eliminating the menance called Shankhachuda. Lord Brahma then took them to lord Vishnu. All of them were taken to lord Shiva by Vishnuji. They expressed their request to liberate them from the troubles created by Shankhachuda.

5.2.133 Shiva Assures the Deities

Lord Shiva assured the deities that he will certainly kill Shankhachuda and hence they should not worry about him. The deities then happily returned to their respective abodes.

5.2.134 Conversation Between Pushpadant & Shankhachuda

Lord Shiva sent his messenger named Pushpadant, to Shankhachuda to ask him to return back the kingdom of the deities to them. Shankhachuda refused to oblige this demand, on the contrary he expressed his willingness and readiness to fight lord Shiva. Pushpadant returned back and narrated the whole story to lord Shiva.

5.2.135 Shiva Proceeds with his Army

Lord Shiva was now fully convinced about the inevitability of the battle. He first sent all his ganas under the leadership of Kartekiye and Ganesha. Later on Bhadrakali proceeded towards the battlefield with a huge army as per the own wish of lord Shiva himself. At last lord Shiva proceeded towards the battlefield accompanied by the deities. All the troops collected at the bank of river Chandrabhaga and rested under the shade of a Banyan tree.

5.2.136 Shankhachuda Proceeds with his Army

Shankhachuda handed over the kingdom to his son and went to his wife to take her permission before going to the battlefield. His wife was reluctant to allow him to go, but he somehow managed to convince her. He then proceeded towards the banks of Chandrabhaga with a huge army.

5.2.137 Battle Between the Deities and the Demons

A fierce battle started between the deities and the demons. Both of them attacked each other with the most destructive weapons. But when the army of Chandrachuda began to dominate the fight, the deities fled away and took the refuge of lord Shiva. They told Shiva of the number of deities who had been killed while fighting.

5.2.138 The Battle Between Shiva's Family & Shankhachuda

After the defeat of the deities and the ganas Kartikeya and Ganesha went to fight Shankhachuda. A spectacular battle was fought between Shankhachuda and both of them. Later on they were joined by Bhadrakali. Bhadrakali would have devoured Shankhachuda without any problem, but she spared his life because of the boon, given to him by Lord Brahma. Now it was the turn of Lord Shiva to join the battle, but even he could not cause any harm to him because of lord Brahma's boon.

5.2.139 Strategy Employed to Kill Shankhachuda

While a tremendous battle was being fought between lord Shiva and Shankhachuda. Lord Vishnu appeared and demanded the armour from Shankhachuda, which he had put on, his body in the guise of a brahmin. Shankhachuda gave his armour to him without any kind of suspicion. Lord Vishnu then went to Shankhachuda's wife in the guise of her husband i.e. Shankhachuda. He destroyed the chastity of Tulsi - Shankhachuda's wife. Shankhachuda derived his power from the chastity of his wife and it vanished the moment, her chastity was destroyed.

5.2.140 Lord Shiva Kills Shankhachuda

Bhadrakali was creating havoc in the army of Shankhachuda. Shankhachuda became very furious and attacked Shiva. Shiva repulsed his assault and attacked him with his Trishul. Shankhachuda who had became powerless was killed instantaneously. The deities were very pleased at the death of Shankhachuda. After worshipping lord Shiva they went back to their respective abodes.

5.2.141 Tulsi Curses Lord Vishnu

After being instructed by goddess Parvati, Lord Vishnu had gone to Tulsi in the guise of her husband- Shankhachuda, so that the breach of Tulsi chastity could help lord Shiva to kill Shankhachuda, who derived his power from Tulsi's chastity and virtuosity.

Initially Tulsi could not recognize lord Vishnu. She was extremely joyous at his arrival. But very soon she was able to realize the real identity of lord Vishnu, who had disguised himself as her husband.

She became very angry and cursed lord Vishnu to become a stone. She was crying unconsolably. Lord Vishnu contemplated on Shiva as a result of which he appeared. Lord Shiva blessed Tulsi that she would become the beloved of Lord Vishnu.

Due to Tulsi's curse, Lord Vishnu attained the form of Shaligram which is a stone and because of lord Shiva's blessings. Tulsi leaves started being offered to the Shaligram, in the process of its worship.

5.2.142 Killing of Hiranyaksha

Hiranyakashipu was filled with grief when he heard the news of his brothers' death. To avenge Hiranyaksha's death, he started to torment the deities. Becoming homeless, the deities started wandering here and there. Hiranyakashipu was still unsatisfied. He wanted to acquire more power and authority. He went to the Mandarachal mountain and started doing a tremendous penance to please Lord Brahma.

Lord Brahma appeared before him and asked him demand anything he wished to be fulfilled. Hiranyakashipu said-

"O Lord! Bless me so that I do neither die during the day nor during the night; neither on the earth nor in the sky; neither by the deities nor by the demons; neither by a human being nor by an animal. Bless me O Lord! O that I do not get killed by any type of weapon."

Lord Brahma blessed Hiranyakshipu and said 'so be it'. Now, Hiranyakashipu became more ruthless and arrogant. He declared himself the almighty God and ordered his subjects to worship him and his idol. His son-Prahlad was a very great devotee of lord Vishnu. He did not pay heed to his father's command and continued to worship Lord Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu tried to kill Prahalada many times, but each time he survived by the blessings of lord Vishnu.

When Hiranyakashipu's atrocities crosses all its limits, the deities went to lord Vishnu and requested him to kill Hiranyakashipu. Lord Vishnu appeared in his incarnation of Nrisimha (half lion and half man) and killed Hiranyakashipu with his sharp nails, during the dusk. After giving his kingdom to his son - Prahalad Lord Vishnu went back to his abode.

5.2.143 Lord Shiva Teaches The Secrets of Mrita-Sanjivani Vidya to Shukracharya

Shukracharya did a severe penance for five thousand years to please Shiva and acquire the secrets of Mritasanjivani Viddya (bringing back dead person alive) from him.

When Lord Shiva did not appear even after such a tremendous penance, then he indulges himself in severest form of penance, by quitting having food and water. He now started living only on air. This continued for thousands of year.

Lord Shiva became very pleased with his penance. He manifested from the very Shivalinga, Shukracharya had been worshipping till now. He taught the secrets of 'Mritasanjivani' viddya to him and told him that by the help of this viddya he would become capable of making alive the dead persons. Lord Shiva also blessed Shukracharya to become a star and attain respectability among all the planets.

After blessing Shukracharya like this, Lord Shiva disappeared into the same Shivalinga from which he had appeared.

5.2.144 Andhak's Splendors

Once, Andhak brothers jokingly told him that, since his real parents were somebody else (Shiva and Parvati) therefore he was not fit to rule them. Though they had told this in good humour, yet Andhak was very much saddened by their remark. He relinquished his throne and went to a deserted place in the forest and started to do a severe penance. Lord Brahma became very pleased by his penance and appeared before him. He asked him to demand anything he wished to be fulfilled. Andhak said-

"I only long for the love and affection of my brothers. O Lord! Bless me so that nobody should be able to kill one except lord Shiva."

Lord Brahma blessed him and said- 'so be it'.

Andhak returned to his kingdom and with the co-operation of his brothers like Prahalad etc he brought even the deities under his control. But drunk with power he became very arrogant and started tormenting all the creatures. He did not show any respect to the Vedas, brahmin and the deities.

5.2.145 Battle Between Lord Shiva and Andhak

Andhak had become so arrogant that once, he even dared to dishonour his own mother-Parvati, who at that time was living at the Mandarachal mountain. Shiva became very furious with him.

Andhak attacked Shiva with his huge army. Lord Shiva sent his numerous ganas to fight him, but all of them were killed by Andhak.

When lord Shiva got the news of the arrival of Andhak with his army, he sent Lord Vishnu and his remaining ganas to fight him. He himself went to perform his austerity named 'Pashupat'. The deities fought with Andhak for one thousand years. Meanwhile Lord Shiva returned after completing his 'Pashupat Vrata' and joined them.

Seeing Lord Shiva in front of him, Andhak became furious and attacked him ferociously. His companion, whose name was 'Vidhas', devoured all the deities. The demons who had been killed in the battle, were brought back to life by Shukracharya.

Lord Shiva became very angry and swallowed Shukracharya. He also extracted the deities from the stomach of Vidhas who had been swallowed by him earlier. After that, lord Shiva attacked Andhak with his trident, which injured him. But from each drop of his blood which fell on the ground, manifested thousands of demons who resembled Andhak.

Lord Shiva then instructed goddess 'Chandika' to drink the blood, while he killed all the demons. Goddess Chandika followed the instructions of Shiva and drank each drop of blood, which oozed out from the wounds of the demons and did not let single drop of blood to fall on the ground.

After killing all the demons, lord Shiva lifted Andhak with his trident and hanged him between the earth and sky. Andhak remained there for a very long period of time, bearing the heat of the sun and the showers of rain. But he remained alive. Ultimately he had to take the refuge of Lord Shiva, to save his life. Lord Shiva became pleased by his eulogy and made him his 'Ganadhees' (leader of all the Ganas).

5.2.146 Reemergence of Shukracharya

When lord Shiva swallowed up Shukracharya, he became very restless and started to find out a way through which he could come out from Shiva's stomach. But all of his efforts went in vain. Finding no other option, he started to chant the name of lord Shiva. His chantings continued for one hundred years. By the blessings of Shiva, he came out from Shiva's stomach through the ejaculated semen.

After coming out, Shukraharya eulogized Lord Shiva. Shiva became pleased with him and showered him with affection just like his own son. After being blessed Shukracharya went and rejoined the army of the demons.

5.2.147 Killing of Gajasur

Goddess Durga had killed the demon - Mahishasur, who used to torment the deities. Gajasur was the son of Mahishasur. To avenge his father's death, Gajasur did a tremendous penance to please lord Brahma.

Lord Brahma appeared before him and asked him to demand any boon. Gajasur said- "O Lord! Even a 'Jeetendriya' (one who has full control over his senses) should not be able to kill me,"

Lord Brahma blessed him by saying - 'So be it'. Gradually, Gajasur atrocities crossed all limits. He became the lord of all the three worlds. He forced even the

deities to worship him. He used to torment the brahmins and the other religious people.

One day Gajasur arrived at Kashi and started tormenting the people living over there. The deities came to lord Shiva and requested him to rescue Kashi by killing Gajasur.

Lord Shiva came to Kashi and fought a battle with Gajasur. He killed Gajasur with this trident. At the time of his death, Gajasur eulogized Lord Shiva and requested him to put his (Gajasur's) skin on his (Shiva's) body.

Lord Shiva agreed to fulfill his wish. At the spot where, Gajasur was killed a famous Shivalinga by the name of Krittivaseshwar was constructed as per the own wish of lord Shiva.

5.2.148 Killing of Nirhaddaitya

Diti was filled with grief when she came to known about her son's (Hiranyaksha) death, who was killed by lord Vishnu.

Nirhad daitya, who was the maternal uncle of Prahlad consoled her an promised to avenge the death of Hiranyaksha. He thought to destroy the vedic religion. According to him the deities derived their strength and power from this very vedic religion. He planned to eliminate the priestly class-brahmins, so that the chances of 'Yagyas' being performed becomes extinct and the deities were starved to such an extent that they became weak and powerless. Thinking that then it would not be very difficult to kill the 'weak' deities.

Nirhaddaitya arrived at Kashi to execute his plan, which during those time was the chief centre of the brahmins. He attained the form of a tiger and stationed himself in a nearby forest. He used to kill any brahmin who used to come over there to collect 'Kusha' grass and fuel. With the help of his illusionary powers he used to attain the form of a hermit during the day time and lived among them. But during the night, he used to enter into the houses of the brahmins in the form of a tiger and used to devour them.

On one night of Shivaratri, when a brahmin was busy worshipping Lord Shiva, Niraddaitya who was in the form of a tiger entered the temple. But, since the brahmin was engaged in the worship of Lord Shiva, he could not harm the brahmin. Lord Shiva emerged from the very Shivalinga, which the brahmin was worshipping and punched the demon with his clenched fist, so hard that he died.

5.2.149 Killing of Vidal and Utpal

Long long ago there used to live two demons by the names of Vidul and Utpal. Both of them did a tremendous penance to please lord Brahma. After being blessed by lord Brahma, they became very arrogant and started tormenting the deities and the brahmins.

The deities went to lord Brahma and sought his help. Lord Brahma told them that both the demons would be killed by goddess Parvati very soon. He also instructed the deities to eulogize Shiva and Parvati to seek their blessings. The deities went back and started eulogizing Shiva and Parvati.

One fateful day, Vidal and Utpal arrived at the place where goddess Paarvati was having amusements with her companions. Vidal and Utpal had disguised themselves as the ganas of Shiva.

Lord Shiva recognized the real identity of the demons. He signaled towards Parvati pointing towards the demons. Parvati who was playing with a ball with her companions, understood what lord Shiva meant to say. She hit both of them with the ball, with such force that both the demons died on the spot. The ball then fell down on the ground and transformed into a Shivalinga which became as 'Kandukeshwar'. The deities became very pleased at the death of Vidal and Utpal.

5.3 Shatrudra Samhita

The sages requested Sutji to describe about the different incarnations of Lord Shiva. Sutji told them that, although Lord Shiva took many incarnations but five of his incarnations were very important- Sadhojat Namadeva, Tatpurush, Aghoresh and Ishan.

This Chapter contains 32 sections.

5.3.1 Sadhojat (1)

Lord Shiva took his first incarnation from the physique incarnation from the physique of Lord Brahma, who was engrossed in his deep state of meditation, during the nineteenth Kalpa named Shweta Lohit. Lord Brahma gave him the name SADHOJAT and eulogized him.

Later on, from the physique of Sadhojat four of his disciple manifested, whose names were Sunand, Nandan, Vishwanandan and Upanandan. All the four disciples were of fair complexion. Lord Shiva blessed Brahma and empowered him to do creation.

5.3.2 Naamdeva (2)

During the twentieth Kalpa named 'Rakta' the complexion of lord Brahma turned red, while he was engrossed in his meditative state. From his body manifested an entity who also was of red complexion.

Lord Brahma named him Namadeva considering him to be the incarnation of lord Shiva and eulogized him. Later on four sons were born to Namadeva, whose names were Viraj, Viwah, Vishok and Vishwabhawan. All of them were of red complexion just like their father Namadeva.

Naamdeva Shiva alongwith his virtuous progenies blessed lord Brahma with the power of creation.

5.3.3 Tatpurush (3)

The twenty-first Kalpa on the earth was known as 'Peetavasa'. It was named so because of the apparel of lord Brahma which were of yellow colours. Lord Brahma's prayer resulted into the manifestation of a effulgent entity. Considering this entity as Lord Shiva, Lord Brahma started chanting the mantras of Shiva Gayatri. After the chantings of the mantras, numerous entities manifested who had put on apparels of yellow colour on their body. This way the third incarnation of Shiva popularly known as Tatpurush manifested.

5.3.4 Ghoresh (4)

After the Peetavasa Kalp came the Shiva Kalpa. A black complexioned manifested while Lord Brahma was engrossed in his deep meditative state. Lord Brahma considering this entity as Aghor Shiva started eulogizing him. Lord Brahma's eulogization resulted into the manifestation of four more entities who had the same black complexion as that of 'Aghor Shiva'. Their names were Krishna, Krishnashikha, Krishnamukha and Krishnakanthdhari. Ghor Shiva along with those four entities blessed lord Brahma with the power of creation.

5.3.5 Ishan (5)

During the Kalpa named Vishwaroop, manifestations of Saraswati and Ishan Shiva took place. Lord Brahma eulogized Ishan Shiva after which four divine entities named Jati, Mundi, Shikhandi and Ardhamundi manifested from Ishan Shiva. All of them blessed lord Brahma with the power of creation.

5.3.6 Eight Idols of Shiva

After describing about the five chief incarnations of lord Shiva, Sutji explained about the eight famous idols of lord Shiva- Sharva, Bhava, Rudra, Ugra, Bheema, Pashupati, Ishan and Mahadeva. These eight idols of Shiva symbolizes the eight natural elements which help in the process of creation, nurturement and annihilation. These eight natural elements are Land, water, fire, air, sky, supreme soul (Kshetragya), Sun and the moon. Being established in these eight idols, Shiva controls the whole world.

5.3.7 Shiva as Ardhanarishwar

Once upon a time Lord Brahma, not seeing an expansion in his creation became very worried. A heavenly voice instructed him to commence creation with the help of copulative activities. But since all the incarnation of Shiva had been males till then, therefore lord Brahma was finding it impossible.

Lord Brahma contemplated on the form of Shiva and Shakti. Lord Shiva became very pleased with him and appeared in his form of 'Ardhanarishwar (half male half female). Left side of his body resembled like a woman while the right side appeared like a man. Lord Brahma worshipped this form of Shiva.

Lord Shiva then separated the feminine part of his body and thus manifested mother Shakti. Lord Brahma worshipped her and requested to bestow such power by which he could create a woman.

Goddess Shakti blessed him by saying – 'So be it' and vanished. This way Lord Brahma became capable of commencing copulative creation.

5.3.8 Various Incarnations of Vyasa and Lord Shiva

During the 'Varah' Kalpa of the Seventh 'Manvantar' lord Vishnu illuminated all the three world by his divine presence. This seventh Manvantara consisted of four yugas which repeated themselves in a cyclic way for twelve times.

The first dwapar of this seventh manvantar saw the manifestation of lord Shiva for the welfare of the brahmins. When Kaliyuga arrived Lord Shiva again manifested himself along with goddess Shakti and was known as Mahamuni Shweta. Lord Brahma had the priviledge of becoming his disciple.

During the second dwapar, sage Vyas existed as Satya, Prajapati and Lord Shiva became famous as 'Sutar'. Lord Shiva in his incarnation of Sutra had many disciples among whom 'Dundubhi' was very famous.

During the third dwapar sage Vyas took his incarnation as Bhargava and lord Shiva became famous as Daman. Lord Shiva in his incarnation as Daman had four disciples among whom Vishoka was very famous. When Kaliyuga arrived after this third dwapar. Lord Shiva along with his Disciples helped Sage Vyas.

During the fourth Dwapar Sage Vyas took his incarnation as Angira and Lord Shiva as 'Suhotra'. Even in this incarnation Lord Shiva had four disciples among whom Sumukh was very famous. Lord Shiva along with his disciples helped Angira.

During the fifth dwapar sage Vyas took incarnation as Savita and Lord Shiva as 'Kanka' who was very famous for his tremendous austerities. Kanka had four disciples among whom Sanak was very famous.

During the sixth dwapar sage Vyas took incarnation as Mrityu and Lord Shiva as 'Lokakshi'. Lokakshi had four disciples among whom Sudhama was very prominent.

During the seventh dwapar sage Vyas manifested himself as Indra and Lord Shiva as Jaigisatya. Jaigisatya had four disciples among whom Saraswat was very prominent.

During the eighth dwapar sage Vyas took incarnation as Vashishth and Lord Shiva as Dadhivahan. Dadhivahan had four disciples among whom Kapil was very famous.

During the nineth dwapar sage Vyas took incarnation as Saraswat and Lord Shiva as 'Rishabh'. Lord Shiva in his incarnation as Rishabhdeva had four disciples among whom Parashar was very famous.

5.3.9 Nandikeshwar

While describing about the incarnation of Nandikeshwar Sutji says-

Sage Shilad did a tremendous penance to please lord Shiva with an aspiration to have a son. Lord Shiva appeared before him and asked him to demand any boon he wished.

Sage Shilad expressed his desire of having a son who is not born from a physical body and who is proficient in all the sriptural knowledges. Lord Shiva blessed him by saying – 'So be it'.

Sage Shilad then returned to his hermitage and performed a 'Yagya'. From the yagya-kunda appeared a child who possessed four arms and three eyes. Sage Shilad was very pleased to see that child. The birth of the child was celebrated with great fanfare. Lord Shiva and Parvati arrived to bless the child.

The child was named Nandi as his birth had given immense joy (anand) to sage Shilad. Later on Nandi lived with his father like any other normal child and was brought up with great love and care. He became proficient in all the scriptures within seven years.

Being inspired by lord Shiva, two brahmins came to sage Shilad and informed him that after one year Nandi would be no more. Sage Shilad became extremely sad.

Seeing his father in his sorrowful mood, Nandi consoled him and later on went to do penance. His tremendous penance pleased Lord Shiva and Parvati and both of them appeared before him. Lord Shiva blessed him and said- “You are just like me, so you will never die”.

Lord Shiva also gave one of his garlands to him. As soon as Nandi wore that garland he imbibed all the qualities of lord Shiva. After that Lord Shiva took out some water from his locks of hair and sprinkled on him, as a result of which five rivers came into existence. These five rivers were later on came to be known as Panchanad. Lord Shiva then made him the leader of all his ganas.

Later on goddess Parvati took Nandi under her guidance and considered him just like her own son. Nandi was married to Suyasha- the daughter of Marut. Ultimately all of them accompanied lord Shiva to his abode.

5.3.10 Bhairav Gets Liberated from his Sin

Bhairav who was created by lord Shiva from his third eye, had severed one of the five heads of Lord Brahma on the instruction of lord Shiva. Now Brahmaji was left with only four heads.

Carrying the skull of Brahma in his hand, Bhairava started wandering in all the three worlds. To atone his sin of severing the head of lord Brahma, he was begging alms.

Bhairav reached Vishnuloka where he was welcomed warm heartedly by lord Vishnu and Laxmi. Goddess Laxmi dropped the learning (Vidya) named Manorath (by which all the wishes could be fulfilled) in the begging bowl (Skull) of Bhariav. Bhairav became extremely happy by this gift. Lord Shiva had created a oegrass named 'Brahmahatya' and had instructed Bhairav to reach Kashi, before her. According to lord Shiva this way the sin committed by Bhairav could successfully atoned.

After being blessed by goddess Laxmi, Bhairav took the permission of Lord Vishnu and proceeded towards Kashi. After his departure asked Brahmahatya to stop chasing Bhairav. But she refused saying that she was just following the instruction of Lord Shiva.

When Bhairav reached Kashi, Brahmahatya too came near the outskirts of the city, but could not enter it because of Lord Shiva's power instead she entered in to the netherworld (Patal loka). As soon as Bhairav had entered Kashi. The begging-bowl (skull) fell on the ground and thus Bhairav got liberated from his sins. Bhairav was extremely relieved. The place where the skull of Brahma had fallen, later on became as Kapal mochan- the most sacred place of pilgrimage.

5.3.11 Shiva Takes an Incarnation as Sharabh

While describing about the incarnation of Sharabh Sutji told sages-

“When Vishnuji took his incarnation of Nrisimha to kill the demon king – Hiranyakashipu, his anger could not be subdued even after the killing of Hiranyakashipu. His anger had frightened all the three worlds. Lord Brahma sent Prahalada to Nrisimha so that his anger gets cool down. Prahalada prayed to Nrisimha. Nrisimha took him in his embrace but still his anger was not subdued.”

“All the deities went to lord Shiva and requested to him to cool down Vishnu's anger. Lord Shiva then sent Bhairav and Veerbhadra to Nrisimha. When Veerbhadra politely requested Nrisimha to cool down, he (Nrisimha) tried to pounce on him (Veerbhadra). Right then Lord Shiva appeared in his most devastating form. He was looking frightening in his giant form and with thousands of hand. His appearance was resembling a huge cannibal bird. Lord Shiva injured Nrisimha with his giant wings and after carrying Lord Vishnu in his

giant wings and after carrying lord Vishnu in his arms he flew in the sky. Lord Vishnu was so frightened that he became unconscious."

"After regarding his consciousness Lord Nrisimha appeared in his form of Lord Vishnu and eulogized Shiva, which made lord Shiva very pleased. Lord Shiva wore the head of Nrisimha with the garland of skull in his neck. The remaining body was carried by Veerbhadra and abandoned at a mountain."

5.3.12 Vishwanar Receives a Boon from Shiva

Once upon a time, there used to live a brahmin named Vishwanar who was a great devotee of lord Shiva. Shuchismati was his wife who was a devout wife. Being pleased by her sense of dutifulness, Vishwanar tried to reward his wife.

Shuchismati expressed her desire of having a son just like lord Shiva. Vishwanar went to Kashi to please Lord Shiva by his penance. He worshipped Vishveshwar linga with supreme devotion.

Lord Shiva became very pleased by his devotion and he appeared before Vishwanar from the Shivalinga. When Vishwanar expressed his desire, lord Shiva agreed to take birth as his Son. Vishwanar came back to his house happily.

5.3.13 Shiva's Incarnation as Grihapati

In due course of time, Shuchismati became pregnant and gave birth to a beautiful child. The whole family celebrated the birth of the child. The whole family celebrated the birth of the child. The name giving ceremony of that child was attended by all the deities and sages including lord Shiva and Parvati.

Lord Brahma named the child as Grihapati. When Grihapati attained the age of five, his sacred thread ceremony was performed. Within a year he became proficient in all the Vedas and other sacred texts.

When Grihapati attained the age of nine, Narada came and informed Vishwanar that death of Grihapati was imminent because of the evil effects of the planetary combinations. Vishwanar and Shuchismati were saddened and started crying.

Grihapati then consoled his parents and proceeded towards Kashi to do penance so that the 'death' could be conqured.

5.3.14 Grihapati's Penance

Grihapati commenced his penance at Kashi. The deity Indra arrived there and requested him to demand anything he wished but Grihapati refused. Indra became furious and tried to attack him with his weapon-Vajra. Grihapati was very terrified.

Right then Lord Shiva appeared and Indra had to retreat from the scene. Lord Shiva blessed Grihapati by saying – “What to say about this lightning – Vajra, even Kaalvajra would not be able to kill you.”

Grihapati became very pleased. The Shivalinga which he worshipped, later on became famous as 'Agnishwar linga. Lord Shiva made Grihapati the lord of all the directions.

5.3.15 Lord Shiva’s Incarnation as Yaksheshwar

During the time when ocean was being churned first of all poison appeared from it. The deities were very terrified to see the tremendous heat it generated. They went to lord Shiva and requested to protect them from the heat of that poison. Lord Shiva drank all the poison but did not let it pass down his throat.

After the poison, Nectar appeared from the ocean, which was drunk by the deities. The demons too wanted to drink the nectar, so a tremendous battle ensued between them and the deities. The deities became victorious in this battle because they had become immortal due to the effect of the Nectar. This victory made the deities very arrogant.

Lord Shiva was very concerned about their arrogant nature. He went to them in the guise of a Yaksha. He asked as to what was it that had made them so arrogant. The deities replied that their arrogance stemmed from victory over the demons. Lord Shiva who was disguised as Yaksha replied- “Your pride is based on false notion, because you did not achieve victory due to somebody's grace and blessing.”

The deities disagreed with him. Lord Shiva then asked them to cut the grass if they considered themselves so mighty. He then kept a grass leaf in front of them. Each of the deities tried to cut that grass with their respective weapons but remained unsuccessful in their attempts. They were all amazed. Suddenly a heavenly voice was heard which said that the Yaksha was none other than Lord Shiva himself. The deities realized their mistakes. The apologized to lord Shiva. After vanquishing the false pride of the deities lord Shiva disappeared.

5.3.16 Dash Avatar (10 Incarnations of Shiva)

Describing about the ten incarnations and their corresponding power (Shakti), Sutji said-

The first incarnation of lord Shiva was as Mahakal and his Shakti was called Mahakali. Lord Shiva took his second incarnation as Tar and his Shakti was called 'Tara'. The third incarnation of Lord Shiva was as Bhuvaneshwar and his Shakti was called 'Bhuvaneshwari'. Lord Shiva took his fourth incarnation as 'Shodash' who was also known as 'Srividdyesh' and his Shakti was called 'Shodashi' or 'Shri'.

Lord Shiva took his fifth incarnation as Bhairav and his Shakti was called 'Bhairavi'. The sixth incarnation of Lord Shiva is famous as 'Chhinamastak' and his Shakti by the name of 'Chhinamasta. Lord Shiva took his seventh incarnation as 'Dhoomvan' and his Shakti was known as 'Dhoomvati. The eighth incarnation was as Baglamukh and his Shakti as Baglamukhi.

The nineth incarnation of lord Shiva became famous as Matang and his Shakti as 'Matangi'. Lord Shiva took his tenth incarnation as 'Kamal' and his Shakti as Kamala. If these ten incarnation of Shiva are worshipped along with his ten Mahavidyas then a man attains salvation.

5.3.17 The Origin of Eleven Rudras

Once, the deities went to sage Kashyap after being tormented by the demons. They complained to him about the misdeeds of the demons, who also happened to be their step brothers. Sage Kashyap became extremely furious, when he heard about the misdeeds of his sons – the demons. To protect the deities from his sons, he commenced a penance to please lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva became very pleased by his penance and appeared before him. He asked Kashyap to demand anything he wished. Kashyap then requested Lord Shiva to take birth as his son and destroy the demons. Lord Shiva blessed him and said – 'So be it'.

Lord Shiva, later on took birth as eleven Rudras from the womb of his wife Surabhi. The name of these eleven rudras were as follows:-

1) Kapali, 2) Pingal, 3) Bheem, 4) Virupaksha, 5) Vilohit, 6) Shastra, 7) Ajapaad, 8) Ahirbudhnya, 9) Shambhu, 10) Chand and 11) Bhav.

These eleven Rudras fought battles with the demons and killed them. The deities were relieved after the death of the demons. They worshipped these eleven rudras to express their gratitude and indebtedness.

5.3.18 Shiva’s Incarnation as Durvasa

Describing about the Lord Shiva's incarnation as Durvasa, Sutji told the deities:- “once Atri – the manasputra of lord Brahma went to do penance at the bank of the river Nivindhya which flew by the foothills of Trayakshakul mountain as per the instructions of Lord Brahma himself. He commenced doing a tremendous penance. The effects of his penance was such that devastating flames of fire manifested from his head. The fire spread in all the three world in no time. The deities were terrified by the death and destruction caused by the fire in all the three worlds. They went to lord Brahma to seek his help. Lord Brahma took them to lord Vishnu and revealed to him about the destruction caused by the fire. All of them went to lord Shiva and told him everything.

Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva went to Atri and blessed him. Atri recognized them. He eulogized them. Later on Atri's wife- Anusuya gave birth to

three sons, who in fact were the incarnations of Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. Lord Brahma incarnation as the Moon, Lord Vishnu as Dutt and Shiva took incarnation as Durvasa.

Durvasa had tested the religiousness and virtuosity of numerous people. He had also tested the religiousness of king Ambareesh, who ruled over 'Saptadweepa'. Once king Ambareesh had observed a fast on 'Ekadashi'. Next day, when he was about to break his fast sage Durvasa arrived accompanied by his large number of disciples.

Durvasa was very furious with king Ambareesh. He said-

“You had invited me for this particular, but you have also insulted me by breaking the fast by drinking water in my absence.”

Sage Durvasa would have burnt king Ambareesh to ashes by his curse, had not Sudarshan-the weapon of Vishnu came to his rescue. Sudarshan then tried to burn sage Durvasa when suddenly a heavenly voice was heard from the sky which said-

“Durvasa is no one but the incarnation of lord Shiva himself.” Hearing this Sudarshan's anger was pacified. King Ambareesh then begged his forgiveness from sage Durvasa.

5.3.19 Incarnation of Hanuman

Lord Shiva was so infatuated by the appearance of lord Vishnu in his form of Mohini roopa that his semen was released on the ground. This semen was established by the Saptarishis in the womb of Anjani, with the permission of lord Shiva himself.

In this way was born the mighty Hanuman. Once, during his childhood Hanuman had swallowed the Sun, which he released only after the deities prayed to him. The sun accepted him as his disciple and made him proficient in all the learning's. He started living with Sugreeva as per the instructions of his teacher – the Sun.

During the time of Sri Ram's exile, Sugreeva developed friendship with him with the help of Hanuman. Hanuman helped Sri Ram in finding the whereabouts of Sita, who had been abducted by the demon king-Ravana. He took a giant leap and jumped across the ocean. He went to Ashok-Vatika where Ravana had kept Sita. He gave Sri Ram's ring to her and consoled her by saying that very soon Sri Ram was going to arrive and release her from Ravana's captivity. He also burnt the whole Lanka by his burning tail and returned to Sri Ram to give him Sita's news while the battle was fought between Sri Ram and Ravana Laxmana got seriously injured and became unconscious. Hanuman saves his life by bringing the whole of mountain, upon which the herb Sanjivani grew.

Being present at the service of Sri Ram, Hanuman performed his duties marvelously. Worship of Hanuman helps a man to become free from all kinds of problems, diseases and hurdles etc.

5.3.20 Shiva's Incarnation as Mahesh

Once, Bhairav who was entrusted with the job of a doorkeeper became so infatuated with Parvati's beauty that he tried to prevent her from going outside.

Parvati became furious and cursed him to be born as a mortal man on the earth. Bhairav became very sad but now the damage had been already done. Bhairav later on appeared in the form of a man named 'Vetal'.

Vetal prayed to lord Shiva who took his incarnation as Mahesh and goddess Parvati as Girija.

5.3.21 Lord Vishnu Creates Turbulences

After the churning of the ocean had been accomplished, numerous things had emerged out from the ocean. Jewels, Moon, Laxmi, Poison, Uchchaishrava horse, Eravat elephant, Vessel containing Nectar were some of the things which emerged out from the ocean after the churning.

A tremendous battle was fought between the deities and the demons to have control over the vessel containing Nectar. The demons had snatched that vessel from the deities.

By the divine inspiration of lord Shiva, Vishnu appeared in the form of Mohini – the enchanting beauty. He successfully recovered that vessel from the control of the demons.

To distract the attention of the demons from the nectar, lord Vishnu created numerous enchanting beauties. When the demons saw them, they forcibly carried these enchanting beauties to their abode –the Nether world. After that they again returned to take control of the Nectar.

By that time, Vishnu had made the deities drink all the nectar. When the demons came to know about this, they became very furious and attacked the deities. A tremendous battle ensured between both the sides. Ultimately the demons got defeated. To save their lives the demon ran towards their abode. Lord Vishnu chased the demons and entered the Netherland. He killed all the demons.

Lord Vishnu then saw those enchanting beauties who had been abducted by the demons. Ironically, lord Vishnu got infatuated by their beauty- who were his own creation. Lord Vishnu remained there for a long time.

5.3.22 Shiva's Incarnation as Vrishabh

During his stay in the Netherland, many sons were born to Lord Vishnu, who were very wicked and cruel. These sons of lord Vishnu started tormenting the inhabitants of all the three world.

All the deities and the sages went to lord Shiva to take his help. They requested him to kill the cruel sons of Vishnu and reestablish him (lord Vishnu) in his own abode, which he had abandoned for the Nether world.

Lord Shiva went to the Netherworld in the form of a Ox (Vrishabh). He killed all the sons of lord Vishnu with his sharp horns. Seeing the death of his sons, lord Vishnu came forward to fight him. He attacked lord Shiva with his various weapons, but lord Shiva remained harmless. Ultimately lord Vishnu was able to recognise him. He eulogized lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva then requested him to return back to Vishnuloka, he accepted. Lord Vishnu left his 'Sudarshan chakra' in the Netherworld and went to his own abode, where lord Shiva presented him a new Sudarshan chakra.

5.3.23 Killing of Vrittrasur

Once, when the deities were defeated by vrittrasur, they went to lord Brahma after hiding their weapons in the hermitage of sage Dadhichi. They requested lord Brahma to reveal about the means, how vrittrasur could be killed.

Lord Brahma advised the deities to male a weapon named Vajra from the bones of sages Dadhichi, as Dadhichi's bones were even harder than the Vajra of Indra by the blessings of lord Shiva.

All the deities then went to the hermitage of Dadhichi in the leadership of Vrihaspati. On being enquired about the purpose of their visit, Indra said that he wanted his bones so that a weapon could be made out of it.

Dadhichi Gave up his life by his yogic power. Indra then instructed Kamdhenu to extract the bones from the dead body of Dadhichi. The bones were on given to 'Twashta' to construct the weapon-Vajra. Twashta took the weapons to Vishwakarma who at last constructed the Vajra.

Indra killed Vrittrasur with this weapon. When Suvarcha – the wife of Dadhichi came to know about the cunning deeds of the deities, she cursed them to became animals.

5.3.24 Shiva's Incarnation as Yatinath

There used to live a bheel named Aahuk o the Arbudachal mountain. His wife was Aahuka. Both of them were supreme devotee of lord Shiva.

Once, lord Shiva wanting to test their devotion, appeared before them disguised a hermit. Aahuk honoured his guest and treated him very well. Lord Shiva then requested him to give shelter for the whole night. Aahuk expressed his inability as he had a very small hut, in which only two people could be accommodate at a time.

But his wife intervened and requested Aahuk to sleep outside the hut with his arms, as it would be inappropriate on their part to miss this chance of proving their hospitality.

The hermit, who in reality was lord Shiva slept with Aahuk's wife inside the hut, while Aahuk himself slept outside the hut. Unfortunately Aahuk was killed by a wild animal while he was asleep.

In the morning when lord Shiva found that Aahuk had died, his heart was filled with grief. But Aahuka consoled him by saying that she was proud of her husband as he had given up his life for a noble cause. Naturally she was very much saddened by her husband's death so she decided to give up her life by jumping into the burning pyre.

Right then lord Shiva appeared in his real form and blessed her by saying-

“In his next birth your husband would take birth in a royal family. He would become famous as Nala and you would be born as Damayanti to king Bheema of Vidarbha. I would myself appear in the form of a swan and help both of you to unite. After enjoying all the pleasures of this world both of you would attain to may abode.

After saying thus, lord Shiva established himself as immovable Shivalinga, which later on became famous as Achaleshwar linga.

5.3.25 Shiva’s Incarnation as Krshna Darshan

King Nabhag was born in the nineth geneology of Shraddhdeva who himself was a descendant of Ikshavaku. Nabhag was the grandfather of Ambareesh. During his childhood Nabhag left his home for 'gurukula to get education. In his absence his brothers got the wealth of the kingdom distributed among themselves.

When Nabhag returned home after the completion of his education, he demanded his share of wealth from his brothers. His brothers told him that they had forgotten to fix his share as he was absent at the time when wealth was being distributed. They advised him to go and meet their father.

Nabhag went to his father and made the same request. His father advised him to go to sage Angiras who was trying to accomplish a yagya, but was not being able to accomplish it because of his attachment.

"Go and try to eliminate his attachment by your discourses. This way sage Angiras on being pleased with you would give all the wealth which remains after the completion of the yagya." Said his father.

Nabhag did the same. He went to the place where sage Angiras was performing his yagya. He preached sage Angiras on the virtues of Religiousness. As a result he became free from all sorts of attachments and the yagya was successfully accomplished.

Sage Angiras was very pleased by Nabhag's knowledge of religion. He gave all the remaining wealth of the yagya to Nabhag. Just then lord Shiva arrived there in his incarnation of Krishna darshan and tried to prevent sage Angiras from donating the wealth to Nabhag, instead he staked his own claim.

Nabhag told lord Shiva that, since the wealth was given to him by sage Angiras himself, it naturally belonged to him. Lord Shiva then sent Nabhag to his father-Shraddhdev to know about his opinion. Nabhag went to Shraddh deva who revealed to him that the person who was staking his claims on the wealth was none other then lord Shiva. He also told him that whatever remained after the accomplishment of the yagya belongs to lord Shiva only.

Nabhag was now satisfied. He went back to lord Shiva and narrated everything what his father had said. He then eulogized and worshipped lord Shiva. Lord Shiva blessed him which helped Nabhag to attain salvation.

5.3.26 Lord Shiva Appears as a Beggar

There was a king named Satyarath who ruled over Vidarbha. Once he was attacked by a neighbouring king. Satyarath was killed in that battle. His wife somehow managed to save her life by hiding in a forest. The queen was pregnant at that time.

At the shore of a pond she gave birth to a child. She was feeling thirsty, so she went into the pond to quench her thirst. Unfortunately she was killed by a crocodile who used to live in that pond.

The hungry child started crying- A beggar woman arrived there with her one year old child. Though her heart was filled with compassion seeing the hungry child cry but still she was hesitating to take him in her lap.

Right then lord Shiva appeared as a beggar and advised her to bring up the orphan child. The beggar woman asked about the origin of the child. Lord Shiva told her that the father of this child Satyarath in his previous life had left the pradoshavrata incomplete. He had also ordered his men to severe the head of his enemy. After this, he had broken his fast in his impure state, without taking a bath.

As a result, Satyarath met a premature-death in his next life. The mother of this orphan child too committed a sin by deceitfully getting the co-wife of her husband killed. As a result she was devoured by a crocodile in her next life.

Describing about the child lord Shiva said-

“This child was brahmin by birth in his previous life, but still he never engaged himself in any religious or virtuous deeds. So in his next life, though he was born in a royal family, buts still he remained poor. You must take this child under your control and after his sacred-thread ceremony gets accomplished, you must engage him in my (Shiva's) devotion. If you don't obey my command then it would not be good for the welfare of your own child.”

After saying like this lord Shiva disappeared. The beggar woman took that child to her house and brought him up with great love and care. When he grew up his sacred-thread ceremony was performed and then he was initiated into the worship of lord Shiva.

By the blessing of lord Shiva, Satyarath's son formed a pot full of gold while he was taking both in a pond. Now the beggar family became very rich. Once again when he had gone to a forest he met a 'gandharva' princess to whom he ultimately got married. This way he became a king. He lived happily with his mother and his brother.

5.3.27 Lord Shiva Appears in the Guise of Indra (Sureshwar)

Upamanyu –the son of sage Vyaghrapaad, was brought up in his maternal uncle's home since his childhood. One day Upanyu was very hungry. His mother gave him milk to drink which was not enough to satisfy his hunger. He demanded more and started crying. His mother mined some wheat flour in the water and gave him to drink as there was no milk left in the house. Upamanyu finding the taste different told his mother that it was not milk but something else. He again started crying.

His mother told him that if he wanted milk then he should worship lord Shiva as he only was capable of making the milk available. Upamanyu proceeded towards the Himalaya and started doing penance to please lord Shiva-continuously chanting the mantra Om Namah Shivay. His penance generated so much of heat that all the three worlds started burning.

To test his devotion, Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati appeared before him disguised as Indra and Indrani respectively. Both of them told Upamanyu to stop doing penance. They said-

“We Indra and Indrani are extremely pleased by your devotion. Stop worshipping Shiva. We will fulfill all your desires.”

Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati did not stop at this. They even cursed Shiva. Upamanyu became very furious and got up to attack the abuser – Indra.

Shiva and Parvati were satisfied by his total dedication and devotion. They revealed their real identity and blessed him. Shiva promised Upamanyu that he would be present in the vicinity of his hermitage along with Parvati forever.

Upamanyu returned back to his home and narrated the whole story to his mother who was very pleased. Lord Shiva got the name 'Sureshwar' because he appeared in the guise of Indra.

5.3.28 Sage Vyasa Advises the Pandavas to Worship Shiva

After loosing their whole kingdom to Duryodhan in the gamble, Pandavas went to the dwait forest accompanied by Draupadi. They started living in a place which was donated by Velotra Sun.

Duryodhan instigated sage Durvasa to torment the Pandavas. Sage Durvasa went to the place where Pandavas were staying, accompanied by thousands of his disciples. He demanded food from the Pandavas. How could have the Pandavas satiated from the hunger of thousands of people. Lord Krishna came to their rescue and saved them from being disagraced. As a result Durvasa and his disciples went back satisfied.

Lord Krishna advised the Pandavas to worship lord Shiva, but they neglected that advice. As a result their sufferings increased in magnitude. One day sage Vyas arrived there. The Pandavas gave a rousing reception. Considering Arjuna to be the most capable among the Pandavas, Vyas taught him the method of doing 'Parthiva' worship. Later on Arjuna went to the Indrakeel mountain to please Indra by his penance. Sage Vyas preached Yudhisthir to remain firm on his virtuously and religiousness.

5.3.29 Indra Appears before Arjun

Arjuna's penance generated so much of heat that all the living creature of the three worlds were unable to bear its scorching heat. All the living creatures of the three worlds went to Indra to seek his help.

Indra went to Arjuna in the guise of a celibate and asked about the purpose for which he was doing penance. Arjuna told him that he wanted to defeat the Kauravas. Indra then told Arjuna that it was not in his capacity to help him achieve victory over the Kauravas, because of Aswatthama who was a partial incarnation of lord Shiva.

Indra advised Arjuna to please lord Shiva by his penance so that his wishes could be fulfilled. Indra then entrusted some of his men, the job of Arjuna's security and went back to his abode. Arjuna commenced his penance to please lord Shiva.

5.3.30 Lord Shiva Appears in the Guise of Kirat

Arjuna did a tremendous penance by standing only on one leg and concentrating his gaze upon the blazing sun,. The deities became very impressed by Arjuna's penance. They went to lord Shiva and requested him to bless Arjuna. Lord Shiva accepted their request.

Duryodhan had sent a demon named Mooka to kill Arjuna. Mooka had disguised himself as a boar. Arjuna was engrossed in his meditation, when suddenly his concentration got disturbed by a loud noise. He opened his eyes and saw Mooka being chased by a band of Kirats. In fact it was none other than Shiva who had appeared in the guise of Kirat.

Both Arjuna and Lord Shiva struck the boar with their respective arrows at the same time. As a result the boar was killed.

5.3.31 Kirat Blesses Arjun

Lord Shiva sent his ganas to bring back the arrow. Similarly Arjuna too went near the dead boar to bring his arrow. Arjuna found his arrow lying on the ground. He picked it up in his hand. Right then the ganas arrived there and asked Arjuna to return that arrow as it belonged to their master (Shiva). But Arjuna refused to part with his arrow. Instead he asked the ganas, to convey his challenge to their master to have a dual with him.

The ganas went back to lord Shiva and narrated the whole story to him. Lord Shiva accepted Arjuna's challenge and went to fight him. His ganas accompanied him. Arjuna defeated all the ganas of Shiva. In the end Lord Shiva came forward to have a dual fight with him. Shiva was very much impressed by his valour. He revealed his real identity. Arjuna was very ashamed that he fought with Shiva. Lord Shiva consoled him and gave his weapon Pashupat to Arjuna.

5.3.32 The Twelve Jyotirlingas

Describing about the twelve Jyotirlingas, Sutji told the sages:- "There are twelve Jyotirlingas which are as Follows : 1) Somnath in Saurashtra, 2) Mallikarjuna in SriShail, 3) Mahakal in Ujjain, 4) Amareshwar in Omkar, 5) Kedar in the Himalaya, 6) Bheemashankar at the bank of Bheema river. 7) Vishwanath in Varanasi. 8) Trayambakeshwar ar the bank of Gautami river, 9) Baidyanath at Chitabhumi, 10) Nagesh which is situated between Darukvan dwarika and Bhet dwarika 11) Rameshwar at Betubandh and 12) Dhushmesh in Shivalaya.

These above mentioned twelve Jyotirlingas are considered to the very sacred. A devotee who pays a visit to any of these places and worship, gets all of his wished fulfilled.

Out of these twelve Jyotirlingas, Somnath Jyotirlinga is belived to destroy the sorrows of Moon. A devotee who worships this Jyotirlinga gets cured from

incurable diseases like leprosy etc. enjoys all kinds of worldly pleasures and attains salvation.

Similarly having a darshan of Mallikarjuna helps a devotee to fulfill all of his desires.

Having a darshan of Mahakaal at Ujjain helps a devotee to fulfill all kinds of desire and achieve salvation.

Similarly if a devotee merely touches the idol of Omkar linga then he achieves the desired fruits.

Kedarlinga is situated in the Himalayas and is considered to be very sacred.

Lord Shiva took his sixth incarnation as Bheema Shankar to kill the demon Bheema. This incarnation of Shiva tool place at a place called Kamarupa in Assam.

The seventh incarnation of lord Shiva was as Vishwanath at Kashi. This Jyotirlinga is considered to be very sacred and fulfiller of all the desires of a man.

Lord Shiva took his eighth incarnation at the bank of river Gautami at the request of sage Gautam. This Jyotirlinga too is considered to be very sacred and a fulfiller of all the desires of a man.

The ninth incarnation of Shiva was as Baidyanath at Deoghar in Bihar. This Jyotirlinga was established by the demon King Ravana. A devotee who worships this Jyotirlinga gets all of his wishes fulfilled. Because of this, it ia also known as Kamanalinga. Devotees carry the holy water of the Ganges from Sultanganj and both the idol of Baidyanath in the months of Shravan and Bhadrapaksha according to the Hindu calendar.

Lord Shiva took his tenth incarnation to kill the demon Daruk who used to live in Daruk forest. A devotee who worships Nagesh, never faces any calamity. The eleventh incarnation of lord Shiva was as Rameshwar linga, this linga was established by Sri Ram while the construction of a bridge over the sea was going on. Having a darshan of this Jyotirlinga bestowes both worldly pleasures and salvation.

Lord Shiva took his twelfth incarnation as Dhumeshwar after being pleased by Dhushma - the wife of Sumedha. Having a darshan of this Jyotirlinga helps a devotee to fulfill all of his desires.

All the above mentioned twelve Jyotirlingas are very sacred and give total accomplishment to the devotees.

5.4 Koti Rudra Samhita

This Chapter contains 28 sections.

5.4.1 The Greatness of Upalingas

After describing about the twelve Jyotirlinga, Sutji mentioned about the various Upalingas originating from them. The Upalinga named Someshwar is situated at a place where the earth meets the ocean. This Upalinga is also known as 'Antakesh'.

The Upalinga originating from Mallikarjuna is famous by the name of 'Rudreshwar'. Similarly the Upalinga originating from Mahakal Jyotirlinga is known as 'Dughdhesh'.

The Upalinga manifesting from Omkar jyotirlinga is famous as 'Kardameshwar'. The Upalinga manifesting from Kedareshwar jyotirlinga is known as Bhuteshwar and is situated at the bank of Yamuna River.

The Upalinga manifesting from Bheema Shankar Jyotirlinga is famously known as 'Bheemeshwar'. The Upalingas manifesting from Nageshwar, Rameshwar and Dhushmeshwar Jyotirlingas are known as Bhuteshwar, Gupteshwar and Vyagreshwar respectively.

All these upalingas are considered to be very sacred. A devotee who has darshan of these Upalingas gets liberated from all of his sins.

Apart from these twelve Jyotirlingas and upalingas, there are numerous other lingas, which have great religious importance. They are Kritikavaseshwar, Tilmandeshwar, Bhuteshwar, Batukeshwar, Pureshwar, Siddhanateshwar, Shringeshwar, Gopeshwar, Rangeshwar, Rameshwar, Atrishwar, Mahabal linga Kameshwar, Ganeshwar, Shukreshwar, Chandrashekhar, Rishishwar Laliteshwar, Pashupatishwar, (Pashupatinath), Kumtinath and Andhakeshwar etc.

5.4.2 Atri and Anusuya do Penance

Sage Atri and his wife Anusuya were doing penance in the forest called Kamad, situated near the Chitrakut mountain. Once it did not rain for many days. As a result people living in that area faced a severe drought.

Anusuya requested her husband to help out the people from their hardships. Sage Atri sat down to meditate. One by one, his disciples deserted him. Only Anusuya remained with him. She spent her days worshipping the Parthiva lingas and circumambulating sage Atri who was engrossed in his meditation. She had vowed not to have a single morsel of food till it rained.

All the deities became very pleased with their penance. They arrived at the place where both of them were doing penance and after giving blessings went back to their respective abodes.

Lord Shiva and river Ganges stayed there. It did not rain for fifty four years. Both sage Atri and Anusuya continued with their respective penance.

5.4.3 The Greatness of Atri

While doing penance, sage Atri felt thirsty. He requested Anusuya to fetch some water. Anusuya went with a Kamandal, in search of water but did not find it anywhere.

Ganga appeared before her and said- "I am very pleased with you. You can demand anything from me you like."

Anusuya demanded only a Kamandal full of water for her husband. Ganga instructed her to dig up a pit and when it was done she entered into that pit. Anusuya filled her Kamandal with the water from that pit and went back to her thirsty husband.

After quenching his thirst, Atri enquired form Anusuya as to where did she find water. Anusuya narrated the whole story. Both of them then went back to the place where Anusuya had met Ganga. Both of them requested Ganga to stay at that very place. Ganga agreed to remain there on the condition that Anusuya donates all the virtues attained by her husband by worshipping Lord Shiva for one year.

Anusuya donated all the virtues, without any hesitation. Lord Shiva became very much pleased by their charitable tendencies. He appeared before them. After eulogizing, Atri requested lord Shiva to remain in his hermitage accompanied by Parvati. Lord Shiva agreed to do so. Ganga also stayed with them. Later on Atri performed a grand Yagya after the completion of which it rained heavily. Thus Atri ended the phase of drought by his tremendous penance.

River Mandakani flows from that same 'Pit' which Anusuya had dugged up. The Shivalinga, which was worshipped by Anusuya during that time later on, came to be known as Atrishwar Linga.

5.4.4 The Brahmin Woman Attains to Heaven

Once upon a time, there lived a brahmin at a place called 'Karni' situated at the bank of river 'Reva'. When the brahmin became old, he went to Kashi after leaving behind his wife to live with his sons. After sometime the brahmin died.

When the brahmins sons came to know about his death, they went to Kashi and performed his last rites. After some days the brahmins woman died too. The Brahmin's son - Suvas again went to Kashi carrying the ashes of their dead mother as per her own wish.

On his way, Suvad became a guest of another brahmin. Suvad witnessed an amazing even in the night, in which he saw his host trying to milk the cow. At first he allowed the calf to drink the cow's milk for sometime. His host then moved away the calf from the cow. The calf was still hungry and was not willing to move away from the cow. The brahmins trashed the calf very badly. This made the cow very sad and vowed to teach that wicked brahmin a lesson.

The calf tried his best to convince his mother against doing this as her action might make her commit the gravest of sins - the brahmahatya. But the cow was not worried, as she knew the method of nullifying that sin.

Suvad was surprised that the cow knew the method of nullifying the sin of brahmahatya. Next morning, the brahmin entrusted the job of milking the cow, the brahmins' son gave a severe trashing to the calf who was unwilling to move away from his mother.

The angry cow lifted the Brahmin's son with her horns and dashed him against the ground. The Brahmin's son died on the spot. When the brahmin returned to his home he became very furious on seeing his son dead. He drove both the cow and the calf out of his house, after beating them very badly.

The colour of the cow had turned blue due to the trashing she got from her brahmin. The cow went to the temple of Nandikeshwar, situated at the bank of river Narmada. To neutralize the sin of Brahmahatya she took dip in the water of river Narmada for three times. As a result she regained her original colour.

Suvad had followed the cow all along the way. He was amazed to see the cow regaining her original colour. He proceeded on his further journey towards Kashi. He met a beautiful lady on the way who enquired as to where was he going. Suvad told her that he was going to immense the ashes of her mother in the holy water of the river Ganges.

The lady advised him to immerse the ashes in the water of Narmada itself, as the holy Ganga herself comes to meet Narmada on the seventh day of Vaishakh every year.

"Today is the same auspicious day when the holy Ganga will be coming to meet Narmada." Said the beautiful woman. She also told him that immersing the ashes in the waters of Narmada would help his mother to attain to the divine abode.

This beautiful lady was none other than Ganga herself. After advising Suvad she disappeared. Suvad followed the instruction of that beautiful lady. He immersed the ashes in the waters of Narmada. He saw his mother attaining a divine body. His mother blessed Suvad and then attained to the abode of Lord Shiva.

5.4.5 Mahabal Shiva Linga

Describing about Mahabal Shiva Linga, Sutji said to the sages- "Mahabal Shivalinga is situated at Gokarna area. A devotee who has a darshan of Mahabal Shivalinga on the eighth or fourteenth day of 'Ardranakshatra falling on Monday, becomes free from all of his sins and attains to the Shivaloka."

Having a darshan of this Shivalinga on any other day too helps a man to attain to the abode of Almighty. All the deities, ancestors, holy rivers like Ganga and the Nagas stand guard on all the four entrances of Mahabal temple"

"Even the most degraded sinner attains salvation if he worships Mahabal Shivalinga on the fourteenth day of Magha (dark lunar phase). On this day people come from all over India to see the grand festival."

5.4.6 The Reason Behind Phallic Worship

The sages curiously asked Sutji about the purpose with which Parvati had decided to appear in the form of a Vagina. Sutji narrated the following tale:

"Long long ago, some sages used to do penance in a Shiva temple situated near Daruk forest. One day they went to collect woods needed for the Yagya. Lord Shiva wanted to test their devotion, so he arrived before the sages' wives in naked position holding his own phallus in his hand. The wives of the sages became frightened by Shiva's appearance.

"When the sages returned after collecting woods, they became very furious to see a naked person luring their wives. They asked Shiva to reveal his identity. When Shiva did not give any reply, they cursed him to become a phallus."

"The Phallus fell down from the hand of Lord Shiva and generated so much of heat that all the three worlds started to burn. The sages became very nervous and went to seek the help of lord Brahma. Lord Brahma revealed to then that the person who they cursed was none other than Lord Shiva himself. He also instructed them to please goddess Parvati, as she only could have them from Shiva's wrath by appearing in the form of Vagina and holding the Phallus."

"The sages followed the instruction of Lord Brahma. Goddess Parvati appeared in the form of Vagina and held Shiva's phallus in herself. The sages then worshipped the Shivalinga. This jyotirlinga became famous by the name of Haatkeshwar."

5.4.7 The Origin of Batuknath

Long long ago there lived a brahmin by the name of Dadhichi. His wife to a low caste, though his son - Sudarshan was very learned. The name of his wife was Tukula. She had her husband under total control and influence.

Sudarshan had four sons. One day Dadhichi planned to go out due to some work. He entrusted the job of Shiva's worship to Sudarshan. Sudarshan worshipped the idol of Shiva daily without any fail.

On the Shivaratri day, Sudarshan too had observed a fast like rest of his family members. He worshipped Shiva's idol in the morning as usual and then went to his home. During the night time, he had a sexual relationship with his wife. After that, he sat down to worship without purifying himself. Lord Shiva became very furious by his action. He immobilized him by his curse.

Dadhichi was very sad to see the condition of his son. He commenced a tremendous penance to please goddess Parvati. After being pleased by his penance, Parvati requested Lord Shiva to liberate Sudarshan from his curse.

Lord Shiva became pleased and blessed Sudarshan by saying that he would become famous as Batuknath and also that the worship of Batuknath would amount to the worship of lord Shiva.

5.4.8 The Origin of Somnath

The moon had twenty seven wives, one of whom was Rohini. The moon loved Rohini very much, which made the rest of his wives very jealous and angry. They went to their father - Daksha and complained about Moon's behaviour.

Daksha went to Moon and advised him to give proper attention to all of his wives. But it did not have any effect on him and he continued giving special treatment to Rohini.

When Daksha came to know about this, he became very curious. He cursed Moon to become weak and devoid of radiance. The moon then sent the deities to lord Brahma to seek his help. At first, lord Brahma became very angry with Moon, but later on he cooled down and told the deities, that Moon can get liberated from the curse, if he chants 'Mahamrityunjaya mantra' by going to Prabhus area.

Moon went to Prabhas area and chanted Mahamrityunjaya mantra for ten crore time after sitting in one posture. Lord Shiva appeared before him and asked him to demand anything he wished.

Moon requested lord Shiva to liberate him from the curse given by Daksha. Lord Shiva told moon that the words of Daksha can never became untrue. However he blessed moon by saying that he would wane during the dark lunar phase due to the curse, but wax during the dark lunar phase due to his (Shiva's) blessings. Lord Shiva also provided moon that he would be present along with Parvati near him (moon).

Thus Lord Shiva established himself as Somanath. The deities constructed a 'Kunda' named Chandrakunda. It is believed that the Moon because liberated from the curse by taking a bath in this Punda.

5.4.9 The Origin of Mallikarjuna

Once, under the influence of Sage Narad, Kartikeya had gone to the Kraunch Mountain to do penance. Shiva and Parvati could not bear the pain of his separation for long. Both of them went to the Kraunch mountain to see him.

When Kartikeya saw them coming he moved to some other place. When lord Shiva saw this he established himself in the form of Jyotirlinga, which later on became famous as Mallikarjuna jyotirlinga.

5.4.10 The Origin of Mahakaleshwar

There used to live a brahmin at Avantikapuri. He was a great devotee of lord Shiva and used to worship dialy.

This brahmin had four sons whose names were Devapriya, Medhapriya, Sukrit and Dharmabahu. By the blessings of lord Shiva the brahmin enjoyed a very happy and contented life. After his death, the brahmin's son continued the tradition of Shiva's worship.

There was a mountain named Ratanak on which a demon named Dushan used to live. Being intoxicated by the boons received from Lord Brahma, he used to torment all the people. He had all the surrounding area under his control except the house in which the brahmin family lived.

Dushan ordered his fellow demons to bring the brahmin after capturing them. All the demons went to Avantikapuri and created havoc. They went to the brahmins and told them about Dushan's order. The brahmins were busy doing worship at that time so they did not give ear to their words. The brahmins continued with their worship. The demon became very angry and tried to attack them.

Suddenly the earth cracked with a tremendous sound and lord Shiva manifested from within the cracks. He killed all the demons. He then went to the Ratnamala mountain and killed Dushan. He again returned to the brahmins and expressed his desire of fulfilling their wishes. The brahmins expressed their desire of getting liberated from the bondage's of this world. They also requested him to remain at that place. Lord Shiva accepted their request and established himself in the form of Mahakal.

5.4.11 The Origin of Omkareshwar

Once, Narad had gone to meet Vindhya mountain. Vindhya was very arrogant in his behaviour. Narad told him that Sumeru mountain was even greater than him and so his false pride had no basis.

Vindhya became very dejected and disheartened. He went to Amgreshwar and started worshipping Shiva after making a Parthiv linga. Lord Shiva became very pleased by his penance. He appeared before Vindhya and blessed him. After sometime the sages too arrived there and worshipped Shiva. They requested lord Shiva to remain at that place forever. Lord Shiva established himself as Paremeshwar Linga. One Shivalinga already existed at Amareshwar, which became famous as Omkareshwar.

5.4.12 The Origin of Kedareshwar

Two incarnations of Lord Vishnu by the names of Nara and Vishnu did penance at Badrikasharam. Both of them used to worship the idol of Shiva daily. Lord Shiva used to arrive in his subtle form and accept their offerings without being noticed by them.

One day Lord Shiva appeared before them. Nara and Narayana eulogized him and requested to remain at that place forever. Lord Shiva accepted their request and established himself as 'Kedareshwar jyotirlinga'.

5.4.13 The Origin of Bheema Shankar

Bheema - the demon, was the son of Kumbhakarna and Karkati. After Kumbhakarna was killed by Sri Ram. Karkati and Bheema went to live at Sahya mountain.

When Bheema grew up he asked Karkati about his father. Karkati told him that his father had been killed by Ram. Bheema swore to avenge his father's death. He did a tremendous penance to please lord Brahma. Brahma appeared before him and blessed him with insurmountable power and strength.

Bheema then drove out the deities from heaven. He went to Kamarupa and defeated the king. He captured the king and put him in prison. The helpless king used to pass his time by chanting the mantra- Om Namah Shivay. His wife worshipped the Parthiva linga of Shiva for the release of the king.

All the deities went at the bank of river Mahakeshi and worshipped the Parthiva linga of lord Shiva. Lord Shiva appeared before them and assured them that the end of Bheema was near.

Lord Shiva went to the king who had been held captive by Bheema. His ganas too accompanied him. All of them waited for the opportune time to kill Bheema.

Meanwhile somebody informed Bheema that the king was doing worship of Shiva in the prison, with the objective of getting Bheema killed.

Bheema arrived at the spot in the prison where the king was worshipping the Parthiva linga of Lord Shiva. He made fun of Shiva and struck the Shiva linga with his sword.

Right then, Lord Shiva appeared. A tremendous battle was fought between both of them. The battle continued for a long period. Sage Narad requested lord Shiva to kill Bheema as soon as it was possible.

Lord Shiva produced fire by his loud roar. In a very short time the fire spread in the whole forest. All the demons including Bheema were burnt to death. The deities and the sages arrived there. They requested Lord Shiva to remain there. Lord Shiva accepted their request and established himself in the form of Bheema Shankar Jyotirlinga.

5.4.14 The Origin of Vishveshwar

With the desire of giving liberation to the living creatures of this world, lord Shiva had kept some portion of land on his Trishul after separating it from the rest of Brahma's creation. The name of this sacred place is Manikarnika. The Shiva linga by the name of Avinukta was established by lord Shiva himself/ Later on this sacred place was brought down from the Trishul and established on the land of Shiva. This sacred place of pilgrimage later on became famous as Kashi and the Shivalinga as Avimukta Visheshwar.

5.4.15 The Origin of Trayambakeshwar

During the ancient time there lived a famous sage named Gautami. The name of his wife was Ahilya. Once it did not rain for one hundred years as the result of which the whole area was affected by drought.

Sage Gautami did a tremendous penance to please Varun appeared before Gautam, he was requested to cause rain. But Varun expressed his inability in causing rain. He told Gautam to please lord Shiva so that his wish could be fulfilled. Later on Varun instructed Gautam to dig a up a pit, which he (Varun) filled with water. Varun blessed Gautam by saying that this pond would never dry up. The sages who had abandoned that place returned there. Everybody became happy and satisfied.

One day, sage Gautam instructed his disciples to fetch some water from that pond. When the disciples reached there, they found the wives of numerous sages present at the bank of the pond. The sages' wives did not allow them to take water and instead they rebuked them. The disciples returned back to the hermitage and narrated the whole story to sage Gautam.

Ahilya pacified the angry disciples and went to the pond to fetch water. From that day onwards this became very daily routine. One day Ahilya met the wives of the sages. They tried to prevent her from fetching water. Not only that they went back to his respective hermitages and filled the ears of their husbands. All the sages became very angry.

The sages worshipped lord Ganesha to please him. When Ganesha appeared, they requested him to drive Gautam out from that place. At first Ganesha was

reluctant to accept their demand but when they kept a persisting he agreed at last.

Ganesha entered the field of Gautam in which barley was being cultivated. Ganesha had disguised himself as a cow. He started grazing the barley crops.

When Gautam saw the cow grazing crops, he tried to drive her out from the field by hitting a grass on her back. The artificial cow died instantly. Gautam was very sorry for his act. Meanwhile all the sages from the surrounding area arrived there. They forced Gautam to abandon that place at once.

Gautam left that place and made his hermitage at a little distance from there. One day he came to the sages and asked them as to how could he atone for his sins. The sages told him that his sins could be atoned only when he circumambulates the whole earth thrice, all the while saying, 'I have killed a cow'. They also told him that after that he would have to perform austerities for one month.

If this is not possible then you will have to help Ganga manifest herself and take bath in her water. Otherwise you will have to worship three crores Parthiva lingas. Only then, you can get liberated from the sin of killing a cow," said the sages.

Gautam made the Parthiva lingas and started worshipping them. Lord Shiva became very pleased by his devotion and appeared before him. Sage Gautam requested lord Shiva to liberate him from the sins of killing a cow. He also requested lord Shiva to manifest the stream of river Ganga that place.

Lord Shiva tried his best to make him understand that he was innocent and the real culprits that he was innocent and the real culprits were those wicked sages. But, Gautam was unconvinced. At last lord Shiva instructed Ganga to appear in the form of a woman. Gautam eulogized Ganga. By the blessings of lord Shiva Gautam was liberated from his sins of killing a cow. After that Ganga expressed her desire to go back but lord Shiva asked her to remain on the earth till the twenty-eighth nanvantar. Ganga accepted to do that, on the condition that Lord Shiva along with Parvati too would remain present on the earth. Lord Shiva established himself as Trayambakeshwar Jyotirlinga and Ganga became famous as Gautami Ganga.

5.4.16 The Origin of Baidyanath

The demon king- Ravana did a tremendous penance to please lord Shiva and to get a boon from him. Even after his severe penance when lord Shiva did still not appear, he started offering his heads one by one to lord Shiva. This way he already severed his nine heads and offered them to Shiva. When he was about to severe his last remaining head, just the lord Shiva appeared before him. He blessed Ravana with unparalleled power and strength. Lord Shiva also made him a ten headed demon once again.

But Ravana was not satisfied. He requested lord Shiva to come along with him to Lanka. Lord Shiva gave Ravana s Shivalinga and warned him against keeping it on the earth, as then no power on the earth could lift that Shivalinga from there.

Ravana proceeded with the Shivalinga. On the way he felt the urge of urinate. Ravana gave that Shivalinga to a cowherd boy and went to urinate. The cowherd boy held the Shivalinga for sometime. He felt that the Shivalinga was becoming heavier and heavier. He could not bear the weight of the Shivalinga for too long. He kept it on the ground. When Ravana returned he became very sad after seeing the Shivalinga on the ground. He knew that, now it was impossible to lift it from that place. Ravana established the Shivalinga there, which became famous as 'Baidyanath jyotirlinga'.

5.4.17 The Origin of Nageshwar Jyotirlinga

During ancient times, there lived a demon named Daruk. The name of his wife was Daruka. They used to torment the people living in that area. The residents of that area went to sage 'Aursh' and narrated about their miseries and requested him to end this menace.

'Aursh' assured them that very soon their hardships would come to an end. He then went to do his penance. The deities appeared before him after being pleased by his tremendous penance. Sage 'Aursh' requested the deities to kill the demons.

The deities went to fight with the demons. The demons got scarred and started thinking about the means by which their lives could be saved. Daruka the wife of Daruk had received a boon from goddess Parvati due to which she had gained unparalleled power. She carried the whole forest and placed it in the middle of the sea. This way the demons again lived without being perturbed by the threat of the deities' attack.

One day the demons saw many boats sailing in the sea, on which were many people on board. The demons made all the people captive. There was a man named Supriya who was great devotee of Lord Shiva. He used to worship lord Shiva daily, even though he saw held under captivity. Rest of the people too got influenced by his devotion and everybody started worshipping lord Shiva.This way, six months had passed.

One day a demon saw Supriya worshipping the idol of lord Shiva. He went to Daruk and informed him. Daruk became extremely furious. He asked Supriya as to whom was he worshipping. Supriya still engrossed in his worship did not give any reply. This made Daruk even more angry. He tried to kill Supriya. Lord Shiva appeared and killed all the demons.

Daruka's heart became full of grief at the news of her husband's death. She went to Parvati and told her how lord Shiva had killed Daruka. Parvati met lord Shiva and both of them decided to protect there respective devotees by establishing themselves at that place. Thus, Nageshwar jyotirlinga came into existence.

5.4.18 Establishment of Rameshwar

After Hanuman brought the new that Sita had been held captive by Ravana at Lanka, Sri Ram proceeded towards Lanka with a huge army. After receiving the seashore he faced the problems of crossing over the sea.

Sri Ram made a Parthiva linga of Shiva and worshipped it. Lord Shiva became very please with him and appeared. He blessed Sri Ram to be victorious. Sri Ram on the other hand, requested him to establish himself in that Parthiva linga, to which lord Shiva agreed. This way 'Rameshwar jyotirlinga' came into existence.

5.4.19 The Origin of Dhushmesh Jyotirlinga

There used to live a brahmin by the name of Sudharma, who belonged to the lineage of sage Bhardwaj. He was a great devotee of lord Shiva. Sudeha was his wife. Sudharma had no son.

Sudeha desires for a son. She expressed her desire to Sudharma but he did not listen to her pleas. One day Sudeha had gone for an outing accompanied by her companions. Incidentally a quarrel ensured among them and her companions made fun of her issue less status. Sudeha became very sad. After returning to her hermitage, she narrated the whole incident to Sudharma.

Sudharma meditated on the form of Shiva and threw two flowers, towards his wife. He thought that if Sudeha picks up the flower, which he had thrown with his right hand, then certainly a son would be born. But if she picks up the another flower then there is no chance of her giving birth to a son. Unfortunately Sudeha picked up the flower which Sudharma had thrown with his left hand.

Sudharma told his wife that she was never going to become a mother. He advised her to dedicate her life in the devotion of lord Shiva. When Sudeha learnt that there was no chance of her becoming a mother, she insisted her husband to marry for a second time, so that he could become a father. But Sudharma refused to marry for the second.

Sudeha brought her younger sister-Dhushma to the hermitage and married her with reluctant Sudharma. Dhushma proved to be a very faithful wife. She engaged herself in the service of Sudharma and Sudeha. She also used to worship the Parthiva-linga of Shiva daily.

After her worship she used to immerse the Parthiva lingas in a pond. This way, when she had accomplished the worship of one lakh Parthiva lingas, lord Shiva

blessed her with a son. Sudharma was extremely pleased but Sudeha became jealous of her own sister.

When the child grew up, he was married to a beautiful brahmin girl. Dhushma instructed the bride to take a special care of Sudeha. So the bride engaged herself in the service of everybody. She took special care of looking into the needs of Sudeha. But still, Sudeha's jealousy did not diminish.

One day engripped by excessive jealousy and anger, she killed Dhushma's son while he was asleep. She cut his body into many pieces and threw those pieces into the same pond, in which Dhushma used to immerse the Parthiva lingas.

When the daughter in law noticed a piece of flesh on the bed she started crying. She went to Dhushma and narrated the whole story. Hearing the news of her son's killing, Dhushma too started crying Sudeha also wept artificially.

Sudharma arrived there. Though he himself was very sad yet he instructed Dhushma to do the daily worship of Parthiva linga as usual. Dhushma obeyed the command of her husband, She worshipped the Parthiva lingas and went to the pond of immense.

By the blessings of lord Shiva, her son was standing at the bank of the pond alive. He came towards his mother and said-

"Mother! I have become alive even after my death."

Dhushma was still engrossed in her thoughts of lord Shiva, so she could not listen to her son. Lord Shiva appeared and blessed Dhushma. He also expressed his desire to punish her wicked sister - Sudeha for her evil deed, but Dhushma requested him to forgive her. She also requested lord Shiva to stay there forever. Lord Shiva accepted her demand and established himself in the form of Dhushmeshwar Jyotirlinga. Sudharma and Sudeha arrived at that place and worshipped Shiva. At last everybody returned home happily.

5.4.20 Lord Vishnu Receives Sudarshan Chakra

The deities went to lord Vishnu, after being tormented by the demons. They requested him to annihilate the demons. After assuring them, Lord Vishnu went to Kailash mountain to do his penance. But even his tremendous penance was not enough to please Lord Shiva.

Lord Vishnu then worshipped lord Shiva by chanting the mantras of Shiva Sahastranamavali. He also offered one thousand lotus flowers to lord Shiva in course of his worship.

One day Shiva wanted to test the devotion of lord Vishnu. He stole one lotus flower from among the one thousand flowers. When lord Vishnu began his worship he found that there was one flower less. To make up for this deficiency,

he offered his one eye to lord Shiva - his eye which has been compared with a lotus flower.

Lord Shiva was very mush impressed by his exceptional devotion. He appeared before Vishnu and asked him to demand any boon he wished. Lord Vishnu demanded a divine weapon to annihilate the demons. Lord Shiva gave him a sparkling Sudharshan Chakra. On the request of Lord Vishnu he established himself in the form of Harishwar Shivalinga. At last lord Vishnu killed the demon with his Sudarshan Chakra.

5.4.21 Shiva Sahastranaam

Sutji told the sages that lord Vishnu had worshipped lord Shiva with the help of his one thousand names. Some of the chief names of Shiva are Shiva, Har, Mrid, Rudra, Pushkar, Pushpalochan, Arthigamya, Sadachar, Sharv, Shambhu, Maheshwar, etc.

5.4.22 The Greatness of Sahastranaam

A devotee who chants these one thousand names of lord Shiva attains all the accomplishments. Chanting it during distress helps a man to become free from all kings of misfortune. Lord Vishnu could kill the demons only because of the power he derived from the chanting of Sahastranaam.

5.4.23 The Devotees of Shiva

Describing about the numerous devotees of Shiva who were famous for their devotion towards lord Shiva, Sutji named a few of them like Durvasa, Vishwamitra, Dadhichi, Gautam, Kanad, Bhargav, Vrihaspati, Vaishampayam, Parashar, Vyas, Upamanyu, Yagyavalkya, Jaimini and Garg etc.

He also narrated a tale connected with King Sudyumna. Once Sudyumna had gone into that forest which was gifted to Parvati by lord Shiva, with the warning that any man who dares to enter it would become a woman.

As soon as Sudyumna entered that forest he got transformed into a woman. He became very sad. He worshipped lord Shiva to regain his masculinity. Lord Shiva pleased by his devotion, he blessed him to be as a man for one month and again as a woman for the same period of time alternately.

5.4.24 Austerities & Fastings Connected with Shiva’s Worship

Once Parvati asked lord Shiva as to which were the austerities when on being performed by a devotee, helps him to attain both worldly accomplishments as well as liberation.

Lord Shiva told her about ten austerities connected with his worship and their methods. He said-

"On the eighty day of every month a devotee should worship me by observing a fast for the whole day and breaking it in the night. But on Kalashtami a devotee

must observe the fast for the whole day and night. He must not have food on that day. On the eleventh day of the dark-lunar month, a devotee must worship me and observe fast during the day. He should break the fast in the night. But on the eleventh day of the bright lunar month, a devotee should observe a fast for the whole period of day and night. On the thirteenth day of dark-lunar month a devotee must observe fast for the whole period of day and night, whereas on the thirteenth day of a bright lunar phase he should observe a fast during the day and break it in the night. A fast observed on Monday should be broken only in the night."

5.4.25 Mahashivaratri

Lord Shiva continued with his statements-

"Among all the austerities and fastings Mahashivaratri holds a supreme place. It falls on the fourteenth day of the dark lunar month of Phalgun. On this day the devotee should take a vow to observe a fast after awakening in the morning and finishing his daily choirs. He must observe a fast for the whole day and night. In the night he should worship me either in the temple or in his own home according to his convenience. He should worship me with the help of sixteen modes of worship (Shodasopachar). He should either chant the mantras of Laghurudra or perform 'abhishek' during the course of worship. While doing worship he should eulogize me and perform 'artis' in my praise. He can perform 'abhishek' with either of the followings - Milk, water, sacred water of belonging to a place of pilgrimage, sprinkling water with Kusha, Sugarcane juice, Honey and Ghee etc. The devotee should engage himself in my devotion for the whole day. In the end he should feed the brahmins and make donation to them. A fast observed in this way gives infinite virtues to the devotee."

5.4.26 Accomplishment of Shivratri (Uddyapan)

After observing fasts for fourteen consecutive years on each of the Shivaratri days, a devotee should perform 'Uddyapan' (religious rites performed on the accomplishment of an observance).

On the day preceding the Uddyapan ceremony, a devotee must have food for one time. The next day a devotee should perform Uddyapan after making a religious vow and according to the appropriate methods. A devotee who performs Uddyapan in the above mentioned way attains to the Shivaloka.

5.4.27 The Greatness of Shivaratri

There used to live a poor bheel named Gurudruha. He was very poor. One day finding no food available in his house, he went to the forest to hunt an animal. Unfortunately he did not find any animal which he could hunt.

Being hungry, he sat down on the bank of a pond and pondered as to what would happen to his family members who were hungry too. He thought that if he waited there, then he might get a chance to kill a thirsty animal, which arrives there to drink water.

Gurudruha climbed up a bael tree and waited for his prey. A Shivalinga was established just under that tree and co incidentally it was a Shivaratri day. When the first three hours of the night had passed, he saw a female deer arriving with her young ones. He got ready with his bow and arrow and aimed his arrow towards the female deer. By coincidence some leaves from that bael tree fell on the Shivalinga along with some drops of water from the vessel in which he was carrying water. Gurudruha had accomplished the worship of Shiva during the first 'Prahar' of the night unawaringly.

After hearing the noise made by falling drops of water, the female deer looked up. She saw Gurudruha sitting with his bow and arrows. She asked him about his desire. Gurudruha told her that he wanted to kill her, so that he could feed his family members.

The female deer requested him to allow her to go so that she could leave her young ones in the safe custody of her husband. She promised to come back. At first Gurudruha was reluctant but when the female deer started giving illustrations from the scriptures, he allowed her to go.

Mean while the sister of female deer arrived there with her young ones. When Gurudruha sow her, he got ready to kill her. Suddenly his movements on the tree, made some leaves of bael and few drops of water to fall on the Shivalings. It was the second Prahara of the night and Gurudruha had again performed the worshiped of Shiva unawaringly.

When the female deer (Second) heard the noise made by falling drop of water She looked up towards Gurudruha. She asked him about his desire. When Gurudruha told about his desire, she requested him to allow her to go so that she could hand over her young ones in the safe custody of her husband. Initially, Gurudruha was reluctant to allow her to go, but when she promised to return back, he allowed her to go.

Gurudruha sat on the branches of the bael tree waiting for his prey. The second prahar of the night was coming to an end and the third prahar about to begin.

The deer arrived there searching his wife and children. Gurudruha again made himself ready to kill that dear. Again some leaves and few drops of water fell on the Shivalinga. The worship of Shiva during the third Prahara had been accomplished by Gurudruha, though unawaringly. On hearing the noise made by the falling drops of water, the dear looked up and asked Gurudruha about his desire. Gurudruha told him about his desire.

The deer requested Gurudruha to allow him to meet his wife and children for once. The deer promised to return back. After becoming satisfied by his intentions, Gurudruha allowed him to go to meet his family.

Gurudruha sat on the bael tree waiting for the deers anxiously. The third prahar of the night was approaching its end and the fourth prahar was about to begin.

Suddenly Gurudruha saw all the three deer's coming towards the pond. He became extremely pleased at the prospect of getting flesh of three animals. He got read with his bow and arrows. His movements on the bael tree again made some leaves and few drops of water to fall on the Shivaling. Gurudruha had successfully accomplished the worship of Shiva even during the fourth Prahar. Not only this he had also remained awake for the whole night of Shivaratri.

The fast observed by Gurudruha on Shivaratri along with the worship of Shiva though unawaringly had made him on enlightened person. The thought of killing the deers remained no longer in his heart. He thanked all the deers for their help in his attainment of enlightenment.

Lord Shiva became extremely pleased and appeared before him. He blessed Gurudruha that in his next birth he would get an opportunity to serve Sri Ram and would become famous as Nishad. Lord Shiva also told Gurudruha that by the blessings of Sri Ram he would attain salvation by the blessings of Sri Ram he would attain salvation.

Sutji while describing about the virtues of observing fast on Shivaratri told the sages that if a fast observed unwaringly on Shivaratri gives such virtues then what could be said about a fast which is observed deliberately. According to Sutji such a fast would bestow both worldly pleasures and salvation.

5.4.28 Different Stages of Liberation

Regarding the different stages of liberation, Sutji told the sages that there were five stages of liberation capable of freeing a man from the sorrows of this world. 1) Sarupya (Similitude with the Almighty), 2) Salokya, 3) Sannidhya (living in the proximity of the almighty), 4) Sayujya (getting united with the almight), 5) Kalvalya (Devotion towards God)

Only lord Shiva is capable of bestowing liberation. One can attain dharm (virtuosity), Artha (Wealth) and Kaam (desires and wishes) by the worship of other deities, but lord Shiva bestowes all the four of them.

Lord Brahma is believed to be the master of the three elementary qualities i.e. Sat, Raja and Tama. Shiva is beyond these qualities and even the nature itself. He is formless. Lord Shiva is a mystery which remains unsolved even though many sages and even lord Brahma have tried to solve this mystery called Shiva.

The fifth stage of liberation is called Kaivalya which is attained by having complete devotion towards lord Shiva. In the present era of Kali, where the attainment of self knowledge is very difficult, devotion is relatively an easier path.

Even devotion has been categorised into two types: a) Sagun (With form) b) Nirguna (Formless)

If man worships lord Shiva with total devotion he attains self knowledge. Each and every objects of this world is nothing but the manifestation of Shiva's power. The creation achieves expansion only when he desires. Shiva is omniscient but himself invisible. Just as the fire, which already exists in the wood but is visible only after it is rubbed, similarly only the 'Gyanis' can experience lord Shiva even though he is omnipresent. Just as there is no difference between cause and effect, but is appears so due to our ignorance, similarly an ignorant man can never experience the omnipresent Shiva by his sense organs. The living things possess ego but lord Shiva is egoless. A man can successfully subjugates his ego by becoming knowledgeable and attains liberation after uniting with lord Shiva.

This knowledge was received by lord Vishnu from Shiva. Lord Vishnu later on revealed it to lord Brahma and Brahma in turn revealed it to his manasputra - Sanak, etc; The manasputra revealed this knowledge to Narad and Narad revealed it to Vyas.

5.5 Uma Samhita

This Chapter contains 20 sections.

5.5.1 Conversation Between Krshna & Upamanyu

Once, Lord Krishna went to Kailash mountain to do penance with the desire of having a son. He found Maharishi Upamanyu engrossed in his meditation. He told Upamanyu about his desire and requested him to describe about the greatness of lord Shiva.

Upamanu described about his own experience when he had divine glimpses of lord Shiva who was meditating

"Once I saw Shiva who was surrounded by all the deities. Lord Shiva was engrossed in his deep meditation. Shiva had in his possession all the divine weapons like - Trident, Axe, Noose, Sudarshan etc. Lord Vishnu and Brahmaji were also present there. I eulogized lord Shiva who became pleased with me. Lord Shiva wanted to bless me with a boon. I requested lord Shiva to bless me with three things- 1) I should always remain his devotee b) to be able to know about the past, present and future events, c) My family should never feel the scarcity of rice and milk."

"Lord Shiva not only blessed me with all these three things, but also to be able to see the Vaivasvat kalpa."

After completing his story, sage Upamanyu told Krishna he must worship lord Shiva if he was desirous of a son, because Lord Shiva can be pleased quite easily.

5.5.2 Sri Krshna Does Penance

Sri Krishna then proceeded to do his penance after getting initiated by Upamanyu with the mantra - Om Namah Shivay. He did a tremendous penance for fifteen months by standing on his toe. In the sixteenth month lord Shiva and Parvati appeared before him after being pleased by his penance. Lord Shiva expressed his desire to bless Krishna. Krishna demanded eight boon. 1) May his intelligence always remain inclined towards religiousness. 2) May he attain immortal fame, 3) May he has his abode in Shiva's proximity, 4) May his faith and devotion in Shiva be unswerving, 5) May he have ten valiant sons, 6) May he be victorious against his enemies, 7) May all his enemies be destroyed and 8) May be dear to all the yogis. After receiving eight boons from Lord Shiva, Krishna demanded one boon from goddess Parvati May he always be in the service of his parents and the brahmins. Sri Krishna then went back to Upamanyu and narrated the whole story. At last he returned to Dwarka.

5.5.3 Classification of Grave Sins

Describing about the sins, Sutji told the sages that altogether there were twelve types of sins committed by a man by his actions, thought speech. Out of them having a desire for another person's wife, being desirous of another's wealth, having evil designs against other people and drifting towards sinful path are considered to be sins committed by one's thoughts.

The following sins are supposed to be committed by speech - Conversating with a woman who is having periods, telling lies, Unpleasing talks and back biting.

The following sins are committed by one's actions eating things, which are not worth eating's, indulging in violence and uncivilized activities and taking other's wealth by improper means.

Even among all these sins some are considered to be graver, like criticizing teacher, hermit and parents etc, stealing the property of temple or a brahmin. A person commits Mahapap (grave sin) if he indulges in any of the following: not having devotion towards one's preceptor abandoning one's preceptor, sleeping on the preceptor's bed, drinking intoxicating drinks, having illicit relationship with one's teacher's wife, taking back the wealth which has already been donated, earning wealth by employing improper means.

A man who commits the following sins are considered to be the grave sinners - burning a cowshed, a forest or a city, not marrying a girl with a suitable man, having illicit relationship with daughter in law, and sister in law.

5.5.4 The Description of Hell

Each living being has to taste the fruits of his 'Karmas', when his soul reaches the abode of Yama after his death. The soul of a virtuous man enters the hell from the Northern side, where as that of sinful man enters from the southern side.

Yamanagri - The abode of Yama is situated at a distance of eighty six thousand yojans (One Yojans - Eight miles) from the surface of the earth.

The virtuous soul reaches there without any problem because of his virtuous deeds. On the contrary, the soul of a sinner reaches Yamanagri tasting the fruits of his sins all along the way. Moreover, when the soul of a sinner reaches Yamanagri, it gets punished by the 'Yamadutas'. The lord of death then gives the final judgement on the basis of each individual's sins.

From the hell the virtuous soul leaves for the heaven. There are many categories of hells all filled up with filth.

5.5.5 Charity and its Importance

Sutji while warning the sages told-

"People who engages themselves in virtuous deeds through out their lives and who have been kind of others, cross the terrifying path of the hell quite easily. A person, who donates shoes or wooden sandals to brahmins, reaches the hell riding on the horse.

Similarly, a person who donates an umbrella to brahmins reaches the hell under the shade of an umbrella. Making donations of bed or chairs to brahmins, help a man to reach the hell after taking adequate rest on the way. Making donations of Gold or silver to brahmin helps a man to attain to heaven."

A man who donated food grains enjoys all the pleasures of life, because food grains sustain life. Even, making donation of water is considered to be of supreme value because life can not exist without it. A man, who digs up wells and ponds for the benefit of people, acquires great virtues. Planting trees, especially which gives fruits or flowers are considered to give immeasurable virtues.

Making donations of cow, land, knowledge and such objects that can be weighed are considered.

Making donations of Gold, Sesame, elephant, girl, maid, servant, house, chariot, diamond, cow whose colour is pure white and food grains are considered to be Mahadan (great donation).

The donations should be made only to worthy brahmins.

5.5.6 The Description of the Netherworld (Patal Loka)

The earth is balanced on the hood of Sheshnag. Lord Vishnu is the nurturer of this world. There are seven more worlds beneath the earth, which are Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala, Tala, Talatala and Patal. Each of these worlds is ten thousand yojans in length and twenty thousand yojans deep. All these worlds are full of invaluable and priceless diamonds. The residents of each of these worlds enjoy all the luxuries and pleasures of life. The demons and the Nagas reside in these worlds.

5.5.7 Liberation From Hell

Even farther than these seven worlds is situated the hell, Where the soul of the sinner goes to after the death. Some of the main names of hell are - Raurav, Shukar, Rodh, Taal, Vivasan and Mahajwala etc. The soul of a sinner goes to each of these hells according to the magnitude of his sins. A man should worship lord Shiva and sing hymns in his praise to get liberated from his sins.

5.5.8 The Description of Seven Islands

The whole earth is divided into seven islands or dweepas. The name of these islands is Jambu, Plaksha, Shalmali, Kraunch, Shaaka and Pushkar. All these islands are surrounded by such oceans on all sides. The content of each of these oceans is salt. Sugarcane juice, ghee, milk, curds and honey respectively.

Jambudweepa is also known as India. It stretches from south of Himalaya to the north of ocean. The total area is about nine thousand yojans. It is further subdivided into nine land segments, seven mountains, and seven sacred rivers near the seven places of pilgrimage and many other rivers.

Similarly the 'Plaksha' island is surrounded by ocean of salt on all sides and spread up in the area of one thousand yojans.

The area of Shalmali island is twice as that of Plaksha island. It is surrounded by the ocean of honey.

The are of Kusha island is twice as that of Shalmali island and is surrounded by the ocean of ghee. Similarly the Krauncha is surrounded by the ocean of curd and its area is thrice as that of Kusha island.

The area of Shaka island is twice as that of Kraucha island and is surrounded by the ocean of milk.

The ocean of sweet water surrounds the Pushkar island. Its total length is five thousand yojans and five lakh yojans respectively. The mountain Manas is situated in this island. The residents of these islands never attain old age. Lord Brahma resides in Mahaveet section of this island. The people living in this island get food without making any effort.

5.5.9 The Description of Planets

As far as the light of Sun and Moon reaches the earth, it is called 'Bhoo loka'. Surya loka is situated one lakh yojan above the Bhooloka. The Chandra loka is situated one lakh yojan above Surya loka. All the constellations as well as the planets are spread in the area of the ten thousand yojans above the Moon. Mercury is situated above the moon Venus above the Mercury and Mars is situated above the Venus. Jupiter is situated above Mars and Saturn above Jupiter.

The Saptarshi mandals are situated at a distance of one lakh yojan above Saturn. The 'Dhruva' is situated at a distance of one lakh yojan above the Saptarshi Mandals. All the planets are situated between the earth and Dhruva star in the form of three lokas - Bhooloka, Bhuvar loka and Swarga loka (heaven).

Mahar looka is situated even beyond the Dhruvaloka. This is the world where the manasputras (Sanak sanandan etc) of lord Brahma reside.

Jana loka is situated above Mahaloka where as the Tapaloka is situated at a distance of twenty six lakh yojans above Mahaloka. Satyaloka is situated six times the distance between Mahaloka and Tapaloka. Satyaloka is also known as Brahmaloka. Beyond Brahmaloka is situated the Vaikuntha loka. Similarly the world of Kartikeya Kumar loka is situated beyond Vaikunth loka. After Kumar loka comes the Uma loka and then comes the Shiva loka, which is the farthest loka. Goloka is situated near Shivaloka where lord Krishna lives with the cow names Sushila, with the permission of lord Shiva.

5.5.10 Categories of Austerity (Tapa)

Truth or Satya is the best among all the types of austerity. A truthful man is the supreme devotee and a great accomplisher. Austerity helps a man to attain all the worldly pleasures of life and ultimately salvation. Austerities have been classified into three types on the basis of three basic qualities or gunas i.e. Satvik tapa, Rajassi tapa and Tamassi tapa.

Austerities observed by the deities' hermits and celibates come under the category of Satvik Tapa.

Austerities maintained by the 'daityax' and man come under the category of Rajasi-Tapa.

Austerities maintained by the demons and those people who indulge in evil and cruel deeds come under the category of Tamasi Tapa.

5.5.11 The Origin of Body

The food intaken by a man gets transformed into 'semen' in the body. The semen is transformed to the woman's womb during the time of intercourse

where it gets mixed with the blood. It then develops into an egg. Gradually all the organs start to manifest themselves. The body then attains the vital force and ultimately comes out from the mother's womb after suffering great pains. But after taking birth he forgets all about those pains. He then lives his life by reaping the fruits of his past Karmas.

5.5.12 Purification of the Body

Before taking birth, the body lives a very filthy environment in mother's womb. It becomes so dirty that even Panchagavya can not make it pure. Remembrance of Shiva is the only means to make it pure.

5.5.13 Control over Death (Ichchha Mrityu)

Sutji told the sages that a person who wants to control death should first be seated on a pure seat. He should then perform Pranayama by holding his breath. While doing this exercise care should be taken that lamp is not burning.

Both the ears should be shut by the index fingers for the period of one hour. After doing this he would be able to hear the sounds emerging from within. He should try to concentrate his mind on that sound. If this exercise is practiced daily for two hours, then he will have full control over his death.

This particular exercise helps a man to attain great accomplishments, self-knowledge and salvation.

5.5.14 The Descent of Ganga

Once, emperor Sagar performed an Ashwamedha Yagya. Indra abducted the horse used in this Yagya and kept it in the hermitage of Sage Kapil. All the sixty thousand sons of Sagar went to search the horse and found it in Kapil's hermitage.

Hearing the commotion and noise, sage Kapil who was engrossed in his meditation opened his eyes and came out to see what was happening. He was very angry. He looked angrily towards the sons of Sagar. All of them were burnt to death except four.

In due course of time, Sage Bhagirath became successful in bringing river Ganga to earth with the blessings of lord Shiva. Bhagirath was the descendants of Sagar. Bhagirath made all of his ancestors alive who had met an untimely death by sprinkling the water of Ganga on their bones. River Ganga is also known as Bhagirathi because of Bhagirath.

5.5.15 The Austerities of Ved Vyasa

Narrating about the life of Sage Ved Vyas, Sutji said to the sages-

"Once while sage Parashar was on his pilgrimage, he arrived at the bank of Yamuna. Satyavati, who emitted the smell of fish, helped him cross the river. Sage Parashar was very pleased with her. He transformed the bad smell

emitting from her body into fragrance. He also told her that she would be fortunate to give birth to a son as mighty as lord Vishnu.

In due course of time Satyavati gave birth to a child. The child was given the name Krishnadwaipayan by Satyavati's father. Soon after his birth the child told his mother that he was going to do penance and he would come back to see her the moment she desired.

The child did tremendous penance and became famous as Ved Vyas. With this deep knowledge and insight he categorized the different sections of Veda. After the accomplishment of his penance. Ved Vyas went on a pilgrimage. He came to Kashi with a desire to write the Puranas. To get the blessings of Lord Shiva he worshipped the Madhyeshwar linga. Lord Shiva became pleased by his devotion and blessed him. Ved Vyas created numerous puranas like - Brahma Purana, Padma-Purana, Vishnu Purana, Shiva Purana, Bhagawat Purana, Bhavishya Purana, Narad Purana, Markandeya Puran, Agni Puran, Brahma Vaivarta Puran, Linga Puran, Varah Puran, Kurma Puran, Matsya Puran, Garuda Puran, Vaman Puran, Skanda Puran and Brahmanda Puran.

5.5.16 Incarnation of Mahakali

Once upon a time king Surath after loosing his kingdom to his enemy fled to the forest. After wandering for some time he reached the hermitage of sage Medha. He started living there, as he had no place to go. The dejected king used to pass his time wondering about his future.

One day, Surath met a man named Samadhi, who was driven out from his house by his own sons. His sons had captured all the wealth. Both of them went to sage Medha and narrated about their woeful tales. Sage Medha advised both of them to contemplate on the form of Mahamaya Bhagawati Surath and Samadhi were curious to know about Bhagawati Sage Medha said-

"The demons, Madhu and Kailash were produced from the filth which came out from the ears of lord Vishnu, while he was resting on the back of Sheshnag during the time of total annihilation."

"On seeing lord Brahma sitting on the lotus flower, which emerged from the navel of lord Vishnu, both the demons tried to kill him. Lord Brahma eulogized yoga nidra. So that lord Vishnu could be awakened from the sleep. Goddess Bhagawati became pleased and told Brahma that in a short while from now she would be manifesting herself to kill the demons."

"Bhagawati manifested herself in the form of Kali from the mouth and eyes of lord Vishnu. Meanwhile lord Vishnu awakened from his sleep. He fought with the demons for one thousand years but could not defeat them. At last the demons told lord Vishnu that they wanted to bless him with a boon. Lord Vishnu demanded their death. Seeing water on all sides the demons told him that he

could kill them where no water was found. Lord Vishnu then severed their heads after laying them on his thighs."

5.5.17 Incarnation of Mahalaxmi

Mahishasur - the son of Rambhasur had captured the heaven after defeating the deities. The sorrowful deities came to seek the help of lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu became extremely furious after hearing about the misdeeds of Mahishasur. Radiant lights appeared from the bodies of Vishnu, Shiva and other deities and collectively manifested into a single form of Mahalaxmi. All the deities presented their respective weapons to her.

Mahalaxmi went to fight Mahishasur, who fought valiantly by changing his appearance, but ultimately got killed by her. The deities became very pleased by the death of Mahishasur. They eulogized and worshipped her.

5.5.18 Incarnation of Mahasarasvati

After being tormented by the demons Shumbha and Nishumbha, the deities went to goddess Parvati and requested her to protect them. Kaushiki manifested from the body of goddess Parvati. Goddess Kaushiki assured the deities and disappeared.

By coincidence the attendants of the demons - Shumbha and Nishumbha, happened to see Kaushiki and became enchanted by her divine beauty. They went to Shumbha and Nishumbha and praised about her beauty.

Both the demons sent a messenger to Summon her. Kaushiki asked the messenger to convey the message to the demons that only such a person can become her lord, who defeats her in a battle. The messenger returned and gave the message to Shumbha and Nishumbha.

Both the demons were enraged. They sent a huge army to bring Kaushiki forcible, under the commandership of Dhumralochan. When Dhumralochan reached there, he told her about his master's command. Kaushiki gave the some reply that only such a person can become her master, who defeats her in a battle. Dhumralochan then tried to abduct her forcibly. Kaushiki gave a loud roar in her anger as a result of which Dhumralochan was burnt to death. The whole army was annihilated by her vehicle-lion.

When Shumbha and Nishumbha learnt about the death of Dhumralochan and the destruction of his army, they sent many mighty demons like Chanda, Munda, Raktabeeja etc to fight her. But each of them got killed by goddess Kaushiki.

Ultimately Shumbha and Nishumba themselves came forward to fight. Both of them attacked Kaushiki with volley of arrows. Kaushiki destroyed their whole

army. The whole battle field became flooded with blood. After that Kaushiki killed Nishumbha with special types of arrows, which did not allow single drop of blood to fall on the ground.

Angered by his brother's death, Shumbha attacked Kaushiks with his Various weapons, but she neutralized all of them. At last, she killed Shumbha with her trident.

5.5.19 Uma Warns the Deities

Once, after having defeated the demons the deities had become very arrogant and proud. They started indulging in self praise. Suddenly they were started by the emergence of radiant light before them. All the deities became scarred and went to Indra. Indra sent Vayu to test the power of that radiant light. As soon as Vayu reached there, he found that he had become powerless. One by one all the deities came but returned after being defeated. At last Indra himself went there.

As soon as Indra reached there, he found that he had become bereft of all his powers.

Suddenly goddess Uma manifested herself and warned Indra against becoming arrogant. Indra realized his mistake.

5.5.20 The Incarnation of Shakambari

The most valiant demon Durgam had acquired all the four Vedas from lord Brahma after pleasing him. Lord Brahma had also given a boon of invincibility to him.

Durgam became very arrogant and started tormenting the whole world. As the consequence it did not rain for one hundred years and the whole world was hit by drought.

The deities went to goddess Maheshwari (Parvati) and narrated about their woeful tales. Goddess Maheshwari was so moved by their plights that tears rolled down from her eyes for nine continuous days and nights. The tear tool the form of a river as the result of which the phase of drought came to an end.

The deities then requested her to recover the Vedas, which were in possession of Durgam. They then went back to their abode. When Durgam saw that people were living happily, he attacked with a large army. At that very moment goddess manifested herself and fought a tremendous battle with Durgam. From her body manifested the ten Mahavidyas and many other goddesses. At last goddess Maheshwari killed Durgam with her trident and recovered the Vedas from his possession. She then handed over the Vedas to the deities. Maheshwari is also known as Shakambhari as she had created river by her tears and saved the lives of People.

1) I should always remain his devotee b) to be able to know about the past, present and future events, c) My family should never feel the scarcity of rice and milk."

"Lord Shiva not only blessed me with all these three things, but also to be able to see the Vaivasvat kalpa."

After completing his story, sage Upamanyu told Krishna he must worship lord Shiva if he was desirous of a son, because Lord Shiva can be pleased quite easily.

5.6 Kailash Samhita

This Chapter contains 6 sections.

5.6.1 Classifications of Yoga

Describing about the various types of Yoga, Sutji told the sages that there were three types of Yoga - Gyan Yoga, Kriya Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. "Each of them is capable of giving salvation to a man. When the mind or intellect unites with the soul it is called Gyan Yoga. When the soul gets attached with external objects, it is called Kriya yoga. The unification of one's whole being with goddess Bhagawati is called Bhakti Yoga. All these three yogas combinedly are capable of giving salvation to a man. A man becomes a devotee by his actions or Karmas. Devotion or Bhakti helps a man to attain Gyan or knowledge. Gyan or Knowledge gives salvation. Yoga is the path through which a man can attain liberation whereas Kriya-yoga is the chief means to attain it.

5.6.2 Conduct of a Sanyasi

A Sanyasi should wake up early in the morning. After getting up he should remember his preceptor or Guru and then he should pray to express his gratitude towards his Guru.

After that he should practice Pranayama and try to concentrate his mind on the six chakras present in his bodies.

After the completion of Pranayama and concentration on the six chakras he should finish his daily routines. After applying 'ashes' on his body he should chant the sacred mantras and perform 'tarpana'. Subsequently he should perform Aachaman and then practice Pranayama for three times. After that he should remember the sages or rishis. While going to do worship, he should maintain silence all along the way. He should do worship only after washing his feet and performing Aachaman.

5.6.3 Methods of Shiva Worship

A Sanyasi should paste the ground with cow dung and construct a quadrangular 'Mandap'. He should then keep a broad leaf of Palm tree at its centre. He should then fence the area with coloured threads from all the four directions. After that he should draw a eight petalled flower in the centre of the Mandap, upon which

he should draw a Shiva Yantra. At last he can commence his worship of the Sun god.

5.6.4 The Greatness of Pranay Mantra

Sage Vamadev was a great devotee of lord Shiva from his birth. He never used to remain at a place for long. One day he had gone to a mountain peak named Kumar, which was situated towards the south of Sumeru Mountain. He met Kartikeya who revealed to him that Pranam Mantra directly signifies the almighty God. Kartikeya also told him that with the help of that mantra a person can attain lord Shiva - who liberates from all the bondage of life.

Though, Vamadeva himself knew about the power of Pranav mantra yet he requested Kartikeya to shed some more light on it. Kartikeya told him that any one could have the proximity of lord Shiva, by the help of the means prescribed in the Shrutis and the Samritis.

Regarding the methods of Shiva's worship, Kartikeya told Vamadeva that though Sadashiva was one, yet he was known by various names like Maheshwar, Rudra, Brahma and Vishnu. Mahesh was created from the thousandth part of Sadashiva. The goddess of all illusions - Bhagawati dwells in the left side of Sadashiva, therefore he is the lord of all the actions of the universe. Sadashiva plays his desire acts by indulging in creation, nurturement and annihilation of this world.

5.6.5 Initiation of a Sanyasi

Vamadeva requested Kartikeya to enlighten his mind with that knowledge, without which a Sanyasi can never attain liberation.

Kartikeya then told him about the methods how a Sanyasi should get initiation from his guru. A disciple should worship his guru in any of the following months - Shravan, Ashwin, Kartik, Agahan and Magh. He should then establish a Kalash and worship it. He should again worship his guru considering him as the form of Shiva.

The guru should then initiate him with the Shiva mantra. After getting the Mantra, the disciple should chant it considering himself as Shiva-Shivoaham. After this the disciple should get his head tonsured. The barber who is supposed to shave off the hairs should be given pure clothes to wear. The barber should also wash his hands with mud and water. The instruments and apparatus, which he is supposed to use, should be made pure by the 'Astra' mantras.

First of all the front portion of the head should be shaved off after that the back portion of the head should be shaved off. The disciple should then get his beards and moustache shaved off. After this the disciple should massage his body with mud and take bath by taking twelve dips in a pond. After taking his bath he should worship his Guru and meditate on lord Shiva.

5.6.6 Last Rites of an Ascetic (Sanyasi)

Kartikey told Sage Vamadev that an ascetic does not die but takes a Samadhi, therefore instead of being cremated he is buried. Therefore an ascetic must practice the art of Samadhi to perfection. If he has not yet perfected the art of Samadhi, then he should keep on practicing yoga till he attains mastery over the art of Samadhi. He should try to concentrate his mind on the Omkar mantra, which is eternal. If his body has become weak and feeble and incapable of doing physical exercises like Pranayama then he should indulge himself in Shiva remembrance. This way an ascetic can attain to heaven. After his death the rest of the ascetics should perform the rituals at his place of death for ten days.

An alter should be constructed on the eleventh day. Five quadrangular mandals should be made facing towards the northern direction. In each of these mandas, deities like Deveshwari, Atiwahak etc. should be established first and then worshipped. The worship should be done as per the instruction of Guru by offering 'Prasada'. This Prasada should be, given to a virgin girl or cow, later on. The articles used in the process of worship should be immersed in the river or pond. In this way, the Parvan shraddh ceremony of the deceased ascetic is accomplished. It is worth nothing that 'Ekodishta' Shraddh is not performed after an ascetic death.

After the completion of 'Parvan Shraddh' the ascetic should perform the Ekadashah Shraddh as per the instructions of their Guru. On the twelfth day, the ascetics should invite the brahmins, after getting up in the morning and taking their bath. These brahmins should be feeded.

The ascetics should then take a vow to worship their Guru by holding a 'Kusha' grass in their hands. After that, they should wash the lotus feets of their Guru and worship him. Even the worship of Guru's teacher should be done.

After the worship is over, the Guru should get up by saying 'Shubhamastu'- benediction to all. He should then sprinkle the purified rice by chanting mantras. At last donations should be made to the invited brahmins.

5.7 Vayviya Samhita

This Chapter contains xx sections.

5.7.1 The Origin of Vidya (Knowledge)

There are fourteen types of learning or Vidyas - four Vedas, Six Vedangs, Meemansa, Nyay, Puranas and other religious scriptures. These fourteen learning along with Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda and Arthashastra becomes eighteen. All these eighteen learning's originate from lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva created lord Brahma to felicitate the process of creation and bestowed him with all these eighteen learning's. He also empowered lord Vishnu to protect the creation.

The four Vedas emerged from the mouth of Lord Brahma, on the basis of which were created the numerous scriptures like Vedangs etc. Since these Vedas were difficult to understand, therefore lord Vishnu took incarnation of Vyas and created the Puranas, so that they could be understood easily. The Puranas contain four lakh shlokas and they help us to understand the essence of the Vedas.

5.7.2 The Tale of Naimisharanya

Once, lord Brahma released his Manomaya chakra and instructed the sages to follow it. He also told them that the place at which the Manomaya chakra broke down would be very auspicious for doing penance.

The sages followed the Manomaya chakra, which after travelling for a long time fell down on a large segment of land and its circumference (Nemi) broke down as predicted by lord Brahma. This segment of land became famous as Naimisharanya.

The sages decided to perform a Yagya at that sacred place. This way the very place, sitting where lord Brahma did creations. All the sages commenced their Yagya, which continued for ten thousand years. On the completion of Yagya, the deity arrived there and blessed them as per the instruction of lord Brahma.

5.7.3 Time – The Radiance of Shiva

Describing about the time (Kala), Vayudeva told the sages that 'Kala' or time is the radiance of lord Shiva. Kala or time is also known as 'Kalatma'. The time flows smoothly without being disturbed.

Time is under the control of lord Shiva. Since the time contains the element of Shiva (Shivattatva), hence its momentum can not be checked by any other power, except that of Shiva. One, who understands the meaning of Kala, has a darshan of lord Shiva.

5.7.4 Time – Calculation

The smallest unit for measuring the time is called 'Nimesh'. The time taken to drop one's eyelid is called one Nimesh. A kala consists of fifteen Nimeshas and thirty Kalas make a 'Muhurta'.

A day and a night consist of thirty 'Muhurtas'. A month consists of thirty days, divided into two fortnights. One fortnight is known as 'Krishna Paksha (dark lunar phase) and the other is known as Shukla Paksha (bright lunar phase).

In Pitarloka the day consists of one fortnight and night of the same number of days. Shukla Paksha is the day of the Pitraloka and Krishna Paksha the night.

One 'Ayana' consists of Six months. A year consists of two 'Ayanas'. One year of the earth is equivalent to a day and a night of the deities. The six months when Sun is in the southern hemisphere of the earth, is actually the time when the deities experience night. On the contrary, the six months when sun is in the northern hemisphere, is the day time of the deities. One year of the deities is equivalent to three hundred and sixty years of this world.

The yugas are counted on the basis of the years of the deities. According to the scholars there are four yugas - Satyayuga, Tretayuga, Dwapar yuga and Kaliyuga.

A satyayuga is equivalent to four thousand years of the deities.

A Treta yuga is equivalent to three thousand years of the deities.

Similarly a dwapar yuga is equivalent to two thousand years of the deities and a Kaliyuga to that of one Thousand years of the deities.

This way all the four yugas collectively are equivalent to twelve thousand years of the deities.

A Kalpa consists of one thousand Chaturyugas. A Manvantar consists of seventy one Chaturyugas.

One Kalpa is inhibited by fourteen Manus one after another in succession.

A Brahma's day is equivalent to one divine Kalpa. A Brahma's year is equivalent to one thousand Kalpas. A Brahma's yuga consists of eight thousand such years.

A Brahma's ' Savan' consists of his one thousand yugas. Brahma's life span is complete after three thousand such Sawanas. Five lakh and forty thousand numbers of Indras succeed one after another during the whole life span of Brahma.

A Vishnu day is equivalent to the whole life span of Brahma. The whole life span of Vishnu is equivalent to a day of 'Rudra'. The whole life span of Rudra is equivalent to a day of lord Shiva. In the whole life of lord Shiva five lakh and four thousand numbers of Rudras come and go.

A Shiva's day commences with the creation and before the end of the night the whole creation gets annihilated. Sadashiva is eternal.

5.7.5 Meditation

Describing about Meditation Vayudeva told the sages that to concentrate one's restless mind during meditative state, a man needs some kind of form

(Swarupa) or appearance. Idol worship is very helpful in this regard. If an idol of the deity is worshipped with full devotion, then a time comes when a man can have its sight even in an empty space. Idol worship also helps a devotee to reach towards the almighty God, who is formless. It is easy for a devotee who believes in 'Sakar' (with form) to change over to the Nirakar (formless) worship of God. But it is very difficult for a devotee who believes in the formless almighty to switch over to Sakar mode of worship. The knowledge of Shiva's essence is a must attain salvation in both the modes of devotion.

5.7.6 Rituals Connected with Shiva's Worship

One being asked by the sages about the rituals which gives salvation, Vayudeva told them that by having devotion towards lord Shiva, a man can achieve all the pleasures of the world and even attain salvation. Vayudeva also told them about Pashupat Vrata and the benefits derived from it.

The whole Pashupat Vrata is divided into five parts - Kriya, Taipei, Tapa, Dhyana and Gyan. The Shaiva-dharma is the supreme religion and the rituals pertaining to it are based on the Shruits and the Smritis. Pashupat Vrata has been mentioned in the Vedas as the bestower of Supreme knowledge. It also contains all the eight organs of yoga, which were created by lord Shiva himself. Lord Shiva is easily pleased if worship is done by this method. The devotee attains supreme knowledge and becomes liberated from all the bondage's of this world.

5.7.7 Pashupat Vrata and its Rituals

Pashupat Vrata has been mentioned even in the Atharvasheersha Upanishad. It begins on the full moon day, in the month of Chaitra. It can be performed anywhere - a Shiva temple, any sacred place of pilgrimage, forest or garden.

A devotee should get up early in the morning, on the thirteenth day of bright lunar phase (two days preceding the full moon day) and after finishing his daily duties he should make salutations to his Guru. With the permission of his guru, the devotee should then put on while coloured clothes and a sacred thread of the same colour. He should also wear a white garland around his neck and apply sandal wood paste on his body.

He should then sit on the seat made of Kusha grass and take a vow by holding a Kusha grass in his hand. After this he should do Havana by offerings articles into the sacred fire. He should observe a fast for the whole day and break it only in the night by having 'Prasada'.

This ritual should be repeated on the following day but the fast should not be broken in the night. On the final day, that is full moon day he should repeat all the rituals and after putting off the fire of the Havana Kunda, he should smear his body with the ashes. He should then take his bath and put on dear's skin or bark of the tree. He should also hold a stick and put on a waist band (Mekhala).

After that he should again rinse (Achaman) his mouth and smear ashes on his body. He should perform the exercise of Ashtanga yoga. Three times in a day as per the instructions of his guru. This way a man is freed from the beastly qualities present in him.

Pashupat Vrata can be performed by a devotee as long as he is alive or he can continue it for twelve years of three years or one year or six months or one month, or twelve days or three days or even one day.

On the completion of Pashupat Vrata, a devotee should establish a Shiva idol and worship it with all the sixteen modes of worship (Shodasopachar). At last he should perform Awaran Pujan and then worship his guru. Through out the period of fast, a devotee should have fruits only and he should sleep on the bare land. Pashupat Vrata done in such a way helps a devotee to attain to the abode of lord Shiva.

5.7.8 Introduction of the Universe

Vayudeva told the sages who had assembled at Naimisharanya that goddess Gauri was the manifestation of Shiva's power and Shankar the omnipotent almighty. Both Shiva and goddess Shiva contain fathomless splendours of which only a fraction is visible in this world.

This world is under the control of Shiva and goddess Shiva. Both of them are inseparable. Just as the light of the sun can not exist without the Sun in the same way goddess Shiva can not exist without lord Shiva. Just as a lifeless body is of no use similarly the world can not exist without goddess Shakti.

This illusionary world is tied up with the delusionary ropes of Shiva and Shakti. The whole creation is the appearance of Almighty Shiva. The ignorant sages describe it in different ways according to their own perceptions. But, the fact is that Shiva is one and this world is the creation of his illusions. A man can attain liberation from this illusionary world only when he has the blessings of Shiva.

Lord Shiva is beyond the reach of lust, attachment and pleasures. His existence is separate from the nature, delusion, intelligence and ego. He is free from all the bondage's.

5.7.9 Duties of a Brahmin

An ideal brahmin is supposed to perform the following duties:-

a) Trikal Sandhya (worshipping thrice a day)
b) Havan (offerings made to the sacred fire)
c) Worship of Shivalinga
d) Making donations

A brahmin should also have the following qualities:-
a) To see god in each soul

b) Compassion
c) Virtuous conducts
d) Satisfaction
e) Belief in God
f) Non violence
g) Devotion
h) Regular study of the Vedas
i) Practicing Yoga
j) Preaching the teachings of Vedas
k) Giving lectures on the religious scriptures.

l) Being a celibate
m) Penance
n) Having a Shikha and a scared thread etc.

A brahmin should never have food during the night and should contently chant the 'Om Namah Shivay' mantra. Lord Shiva is not pleased that much by rituals as by faith and devotion. A man who worships lord Shiva while maintaining the rules of 'Varnashram Dharma', has the blessings of lord Shiva and all of his desires are fulfilled.

5.7.10 Chanting of Mantras

After getting initiated with the Shiva mantra, a devotee should chant it for once crore times or fifty lakh times, or twenty lakh times or ten lakh times, while worshipping Shiva. 'Havana' should be performed for tenth part of the total chanting. 'Tarpan' should be performed for tenth part of the number of Havana. Similarly 'Marjan' should be performed for the tenth part of the numbers of Tarpan. The numbers of Brahmins selected for feeding should be equivalent to the tenth part of the numbers of Marjan.

At last the disciple should give donations to the brahmins and engage himself in the welfare of society as per the instructions of his Guru.

5.7.11 Establishing Deities in the form of Alphabets within the Body (MATRIKA NYAS)

Asceticism (Nyas) are of three types - Sthiti (posture) Utpatti (origin) and Laya (fusion).
Establishing and chanting the cryptic mantras (alphabets) from the thumb to the little finger is called 'Sthiti nyas'.
Establishing and then chanting the cryptic mantras from the right thumb to the left thumb is called "Utpatti nyas'.
Establishing and then chanting the cryptic mantras from the left thumb to the right thumb is called 'Laya Nyas'.
'Sthiti' nyas should be practiced by the householders 'Utpatti nyas' should be practiced by the celibates 'Laya nyas' should be practiced by those people who have relinquished the world (Vanprasth).

A widow should practice Sthiti Nyas. An unmarried girl should practice Utapatti Nyas.
These modes of Nyas should be practiced only after being taught by the Guru.

5.7.12 Mental Worship of Shiva

While doing a mental worship of Shiva, a devotee should worship lord Ganesha by following the 'Nyas' mode of worship. After that he should worship various deities related with lord Shiva like Nandi etc. Then he should bring the form of lord Shiva into his imagination and worship him mentally by making mental offerings.

The devotee should then perform Havana in the navel of lord Shiva by offering ghee. The worship should be accomplished by meditating on the form of Shiva.

5.7.13 Method of Doing Mental Worship

The devotee should take his seat only after purifying it. He should take a vow after completing all the necessary rituals like 'Achaman'. Pranayam, tying a knot in his Shikha etc.

After doing the 'Deepa Pujan' he should worship various deities like Sun god, Moon god, Varun, Ganesha and Kartikeya etc. He should then worship both Shiva and Shakti by employing all the sixteen modes of worship (Shodasopachar). The devotee should perform 'arti' in the end.

In the specialized form of Shiva's worship 'Awaran Pujan' of Shiva is done along with the normal pujan. Awaran Pujan means worship of all the articles connected with lord Shiva like his trident his drum etc. In this specialized worship the Shiva's idol should be bathed first of all. Then the idol should be clothed. A sacred thread should be offered to the Shiva's idol along with the other offerings like 'tilak', Akshat etc. After this the 'awaran pujan of Shiva should be done along with the worship of Shiva's family.

If the devotee feels that something was lacking in the worship, he should atone for that mistake by chanting the Panchakshar mantra Om Namah Shivay.

5.7.14 Method of Performing Havan

While performing a Shiva Yagya a devotee should make offerings to the 'havanakunda' made of iron or mud. Fire should be ignited in the havankunda following the methods as prescribed in the scriptures. He can then commence the actual worship.

The devotee should make of offerings of ghee with Sruva (a wooden spoon) and other articles with his hands. The offerings should be first made in the names of lord Brahma (Prajapati) then to the nine planets and other deities. After that offerings should be made in the name of the chief deity.

The devotee should then make nine offerings to each of the deities like Agni, Vayu and Surya etc. At last he should perform the arti and atone for those mistakes, which he might have committed during the whole process of worship. He should also give donations to the brahmins and feed them.

5.7.15 Auspicious Days for Performing Shiva Worship

The eighth day and the fourteenth day of both the fortnights of each Hindu month are considered to be the most auspicious for the worship of lord Shiva.

Similarly the solstice day (Sankranti), when the sun is positioned north of equator and eclipse day are considered to be very auspicious. On these days a special worship of lord Shiva should be done by bathing the Shiva idol with Panchagavya and having it is prasadam. It frees a man from the gravest of sins.
Similarly the day of 'Pushya' Nakshatra falling in the month of 'Pausha' is considered as very auspicious and performing arti of Shiva on this day gives immense virtues.
Making donations of Ghee and blankets on 'Magha Nakshatra' falling in the month of Magh gives immense virtues.
The following days are considered to be the most auspicious for the worship of lord Shiva.

- Uttara Falguni Nakshatra on the same day as Purnima, in the month of Falgun.
- Chitra Nakshatra falling on the same day as Purnima in the month of Chaitra.
- Vishakha Nakshatra falling on the same day as Purnima, in the month of Vaishakh.
- Moola Nakshatra falling in the month of Jyeshtha.
- Uttarashadha Nakshatra falling in the month of 'Ashadha'.
- Shravana Nakshatra falling in the month of Shravana.
- Uttara bhadra Nakshatra falling in the month of 'Bhadra'.
- Purnima in the month of Ashwin.
- Kartika Nakshatra falling on the same day as Purnima in the month of Kartik.
- Ardra Nakshatra falling in the month of Margasheersha

5.7.16 Desirable Rituals (Kamya Karma)

Rituals can be categorized in to two types-
1) Rituals performed with the objective of fulfilling worldly desires.
2) Rituals pertaining to Ultra mundan desires.

In general, rituals can be classified into five categories - rituals, penance, chanting of mantras, meditation, and all the four collectively.
For performance of rituals a man needs power and strength and one can not achieve power unless and until Shiva wishes it. It is only with the blessings of Shiva that a man can attain both worldly pleasures as well as liberation.
These rituals (Kamya Karma) are performed by making a mandal facing towards east and doing 'awaran pujan' as well as worship of lord Shiva. Worship of lord Shiva done in this way fulfills all the desires of a man.

5.7.17 Rituals Pertaining to Shiva Worship (Shaiva Kamya Karma)

The methods for the worship of five 'awarans' of Shiva have been mentioned in Shivamahastotra. Each of the 'awarans' have separate presiding deities, the worship of which should be done according to the methods as described in the Shivapuran or as per the instruction of Guru.

5.7.18 Installation of Shiva Linga

According to the scriptures, a Shiva linga should be made in an auspicious moment. The land, where the Shivalinga is supposed to be installed should be purified by performing 'Bhoomi-Pujan'.

After bhoomi-Pujan, worshipping lord Ganesha should be done. After that, the Shiva linga should be purified by washing it with panchgavya and after worshipping it, it should be immersed in the water.

The Shivalinga should be then taken out from the water and after worshipping it, it should be laid down on the bed meant for him. It should be then installed at the desired place and should be consecrated by chanting the mantras. All the rituals should be performed as per the instructions of Guru.

5.7.19 Classification of Yoga

Yoga means such actions, which after pacifying all the human tendencies helps a man to unite with Shiva. Following are the five divisions of yoga-

1) Mantra Yoga,
2) Sparsh Yoga (union of touch),
3) Bhava Yoga (union by devotion),
4) Abhava yoga (Union without being emotionally attached),
5) Mahayoga (The great union).

Mantra yoga helps a man to understand the meaning of mantras and uniting with Shiva by the concentration of mind.

When Mantra yoga is perfected by the practice of Pranayama it is called 'Sparshyoga'.

Bhavayoga means meditating and chanting without uttering a word.

Abhava yoga means such a union when the devotee contemplates on the final annihilation, without being emotionally attached with the world.

A man whose mind is preoccupied with the thoughts of Shiva is supposed to have attained the state of Mahayoga. A yogi can unite with Shiva after purifying his body with the help of Pranayama etc.

5.7.20 Hurdle in the Path of Yoga

There are possibilities of numerous hurdles being faced by a man who practices yoga like laziness, disease, carelessness, lack of concentration, confusion and sorrow etc. While practicing yoga, one must try to keep himself free from such demerits. After becoming liberated from these flaws a man can easily attain six types of accomplishment - talent (Pratibha), super power of hearing (Shravan), excellent conversational power and power of speech (Vrata), Divine sight (Darshan), Divine power of taste (Aswad), Divine power of touch (Vedana).

The capability of seeing things situated at distant places is called 'Pratibha'.
The ability to listen without making any effort is called 'Shravan'.
The ability to decipher the meaning of animal's language is called 'Vrata'.

Being able to see divine things without making any effort is called 'Darshan'.

The power, which enables a man to know about the taste of a thing without actually tasting it, is called 'Aswad'.

'Vedana' means the knowledge of all types of touch.

5.7.21 Shiva Yoga

A devotee can attain all types of accomplishment merely by having devotion towards lord Shiva and by meditating on him. In the beginning, a yogi should try to meditate on the form of Shiva (Saguna), but later on the switch over to Shiva's formless (nirguna) quality. Meditating on nirguna form of Shiva is not easy. It can be mastered only by constant and steady practice, When mastered it bestows all kinds of accomplishment. Meditation combined with Pranayama gives four types of accomplishments peace (Shanti), tranquility (Prashanti), luster (Dipti) and boon (Prasad). A devotee can have a darshan of lord Shiva if he does meditation with non attachment.

5.7.22 SanatKumar Receive Shiva-Gyan from Nandi

The sages thanked Vayudeva for giving the knowledge of Gyan-Yoga. The next day, they took bath in river Saraswati and performed their worship and rituals. After that they proceeded towards Kashi.

At Kashi after taking their bath in river Ganga they had a darshan of lord Vishwanath. They saw very radiant effulgence appearing in the sky, in which they saw thousand sages who had accomplished Pashupat Vrata getting merged. The radiant effulgence vanished in no time.

The sages were very curious to know about that radiant effulgence, so they went to lord Brahma and asked him about it. Lord Brahma told them that the radiant effulgence had actually instructed them to accomplish Pashupat Vrata and attain Salvation. Lord Brahma then instructed them to go to the Sumeru

mountain where Nandi was supposed to come and teach the methods of doing Pashupat Vrata to Sanat Kumar.

Once Sanat Kumar became very arrogant of his asceticism. One day lord Shiva arrived at his place but Sanat Kumar did not get up to greet him. At this Nandi became furious and cursed him to become a camel. Sanat Kumar got transformed into a camel.

Lord Brahma worshipped Shiva to liberate his son - Sanat Kumar from the curse. Lord Shiva became pleased and blessed Sanat Kumar, as the result of which he regained his human body.

After regaining his human body Sanat Kumar commenced a tremendous penance. Lord Shiva instructed Nandi to go to Sumeru mountain and preach Sanat Kumar.

The sages reached Sumeru mountain as per the instruction of lord Brahma. They saw many sages meditating at the bank of a pond. They also saw Sanat Kumar engrossed in his meditation at a little distance from the other meditating sages.

The sages went near Sanat Kumar and told him about their penances done for ten thousand years. They also revealed to him about the purpose of their arrival. Right then, Nandi arrived there, accompanied by his ganas Sanat Kumar and all the sages welcomed him.

Sanat Kumar introduced all the sages to Nandi and told him about their tremendous penance done for ten thousand years. Nandi became very pleased and blessed them. He then preached Sanat Kumar and all the sages on the Shiva-tattva.

Sanat Kumar passed on that knowledge to Sage Vyas, who again passed it on to Sutji. Sutji then revealed this knowledge to those sages who had assembled at Prayag.

After receiving that knowledge from Sutji all the sages went to Prayaga teertha and took their bath. As they saw the signs of approaching Kaliyuga, they went to Kashi and performed the Pashupat Vrata. All of them attained liberation with the blessings of Lord Vishnu.

Listening to Shivapuran for one time liberates a man from all of his sins. Listening to it for two times helps him to develop devotion in lord Shiva. Listening to Shivapuran for three times, helps a man to attain to the abode of Shiva.

6 Vamana Purana

This Purana consists of the following 26 chapters:

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contains only 1 section:

Narad asks sage Pulastya about Vaaman incarnation:

Vaaman Puraan is one of the eighteen Puraans written by sage Vyasa. It contains tales pertaining to Lord Vishnu in his Vaaman (dwarf) incarnation. Sage Pulastya while giving answers to Narad's enquiry narrates the tale of Vaaman Puraan.

All the Puraans give glimpses of Indian civilization and culture and Vaaman Puraan is no exception. It also teaches the virtue of righteousness and religiousness. Vaaman Puraan not only contains the divine tales of Nara-Narayana and Goddess Durga but it also contains tales of famous devotees like Prahlad, the salvation of Gajendra (elephant) etc.

Sage Narad asks Pulastya- "O revered sage! Why did Shri Hari take the incarnation of Vaaman? Why did Prahlad fight a battle with the deities despite being a devotee of Lord Vishnu? How did Sati, Daksha Prajapati's daughter become Mahadev's consort in her next birth? I am eager to know the answers to all these questions."

Pulastya replied- "O Narad! Once, Sati requested Lord Shankar to make arrangements for a permanent abode. At that time, Lord Shankar had his abode at Mandaar Mountain. Summer season was approaching and Sati quite rightly had apprehensions of living in the open. Lord Shankar told her that as he was a recluse, he never felt a need of a permanent dwelling. Though Sati was not satisfied by his answers yet she kept quiet. This way, both of them continued to live there. The summer season had passed and now it was the turn of rainy season to arrive. Sati made the same request to Lord Shankar. This time, Lord Shankar told her that it was impossible for him to construct a house, as he had no wealth. He also told her that he had only a tiger skin as his clothing, the king cobra- his sacred thread, Padma and Pingal (snakes)- his ear-rings and Keval and Dhananjay as his armlets.

After hearing this, Sati became worried as to how she would pass the rainy season without a home. Lord Shankar then assured her that this problem would be easily solved if she lived above the clouds. This way, she would remain untouched by the showers. After this, both of them ascended towards the sky and started living above the clouds. From that day onwards, Lord Shankar came to be known as Jeebhootvaahan (one whose vehicle is the cloud).

6.2 Tales of Lord Shiva

This chapter contains 4 sections:

6.2.1 Shiva Returns to Mandaar Mountain

DAKSHA PERFORMS A GRAND YAGYA

Pulastya says- "This way, both Shiva and Sati lived above the clouds till the end of rainy season. When autumn season arrived, both decided on returning to Mandaar Mountain. Daksha had organised a grand Yagya in which he had invited all the prominent deities and sages except his own son-in-law, Shankar and his daughter, Sati."

Narad was surprised as to why Maheshwar- the lord of all splendours was not invited by Daksha. He was also curious to know why Lord Shankar had become a Kapaali (a mendicant). Pulastya told him that during the period of final annihilation, Lord Vishnu after waking up from his sleep found a divine entity, who possessed three eyes, who had a trident in his hands and who wore a Rudraksha garland around his neck. Lord Vishnu then created ego, which had its evil effects on both Brahma and Shankar. Lord Shiva in his arrogance asked Brahma, his identity and origin. Lord Brahma then arrogantly asked Shankar, his identity. This way, a dispute ensued that later on turned into a fight in which, Brahma defeated Shankar. Lord Shiva severed two of the five heads of Lord Brahma. But the second head fell and got stuck on Lord Shiva's left palm. Angrily, Lord Brahma created a terrific creature, which challenged Shankar and ridiculed him by saying that as he (Shankar) was a sinner, therefore, he would not dirty his hands by killing him.

Lord Shankar was ashamed of himself. He went to Badrikashrama and requested Lord Vishnu for some alms. Lord Vishnu asked Shankar to hit on his (Vishnu's) left arm. Shankar hit Vishnu's left arm with his trident and the impact resulted in the creation of three streams. The first stream went up in the sky and established itself as Akashganga. The second one was Mandakini, which was received by sage Atri. The third stream fell on the skull, which was stuck in Lord Shankar's left palm. This resulted in the manifestation of a divine child who was ferocious and well armed with bow and arrows. Shankar instructed him to kill that creature, which was created by Brahma.

A tremendous duel was fought between them, which was inconclusive for thousands of divine years.

6.2.2 Atonement of Lord Shankar

Lord Shiva had committed a grave sin of Brahmahatya. All his efforts of separating Brahma's skull from his left palm went in vain. In the meantime, an entity named Brahmahatya appeared before him and entered into his body.

Lord Shankar decided to go to Badrikashrama to atone for his sins. After reaching there, he became worried when he did not find Lord Vishnu. He went to

take a bath in river Yamuna but as soon as he entered the river, the water dried up. He experienced this strange phenomenon at the Saraswati River as well. He then made pilgrimages to numerous sacred and holy places but still did not become free from Brahmahatya. Dejected, he ultimately went to Kurukshetra where he found Shri Narayana and requested him to free him (Shankar) from the sins of Brahmahatya. Lord Vishnu advised him to go on a pilgrimage to Varanasi where he would be liberated from his sins.

Following Vishnu's instructions, Lord Shankar went to Varanasi and visited all the sacred sites like Dashashwamedh temple, Lolarka temple and Keshav temple. While he was worshipping Keshav, he said- "Though I have become liberated from my sins, yet I fail to understand the reason why this skull still sticks in my hand." Keshav told him that his problems would be solved if he takes a bath in the lake, which was near the temple. Lord Shankar took a bath in that lake and ultimately the skull fell on the ground. The place where the skull had fallen later on became famous as Kapaalmochan.

6.2.3 Sati Gives up her Life

Sage Pulastya says- "O Narad! This way, Lord Shiva became famous as Kapaali. This was the reason why Daksha did not invite him. In the meantime, Jaya, sage Gautam's daughter went to see Sati at Mandaar Mountain. Seeing her alone, Sati asked about her two sisters, Jayanti and Aparajita. Jaya revealed to her that both of them had gone to their maternal-grandfather's (Daksha) Yagya. Jaya also told her that all the deities had been invited to the Yagya. When Sati heard this, she was grieved and angry with her father. In a fit of rage, she gave up her life. Seeing her lifeless body, Jaya started wailing. Lord Shiva arrived there and upon hearing Jaya's wails, asked her why Sati was lying on the ground. Jaya then narrated the whole story. Lord Shankar became so infuriated that it resulted in the creation of numerous Ganas among whom Veerbhadra was the most prominent one.

Lord Shiva accompanied by the Ganas went to the site where Daksha was performing the Yagya. A tremendous battle ensued between them and the deities and finally, the deities were overpowered and ran away from the site. Veerbhadra, finding the time opportune, entered the oblation site. When the deities saw him entering the oblation site, they returned and tried to prevent him from doing so. Again, an intense battle erupted between both the sides. The deities used all kinds of weapons but they could not control the onslaught of Veerbhadra and fled.

Veerbhadra then went near the sacrificial fire. The sages were terrified and ran towards Lord Vishnu who attacked Veerbhadra with arrows but it did not hurt him at all. Vishnu then attacked him with other divine weapons. But still, Veerbhadra succeeded in neutralising those weapons. Vishnu was enraged and attacked him with his Sudarshan chakra that Veerbhadra swallowed. This angered Lord Vishnu further. He lifted Veerbhadra and dashing him to the ground, pressed Veerbhadra's stomach as a result of which, the Sudarshan

chakra came out from his mouth. But Lord Vishnu spared Veerbhadra's life. Veerbhadra then went to Lord Shiva and narrated his woeful tale of defeat. Lord Shiva instructed Veerbhadra to leave for a safer haven and himself went to the oblation site accompanied by Bhadrakali. The sages became scared on seeing his terrifying appearance.

6.2.4 The Destruction of Daksha’s Yagya

Fearing Lord Shiva's wrath, Lord Vishnu went to Hrishikesh and remained aloof for quite some time. Shiva's anger generated so much heat that it was enough to melt the eight Vasus. As a result, a river named Sita started flowing from there. After being attacked by Lord Shiva, the deities fled from the scene.

Lord Shiva then opened his third eye and furiously looked at the flame burning in the Havan-kund. The next moment, the fire went off. Even Yagya was terrified and he took the aerial route in the guise of a deer. Lord Shiva chased him in the appearance of Kaal (Lord of death) with a bow and arrow named Pashupat.

In the end, Kaal (epithet of Shiva) was successful in killing the deer, which was Yagya in reality. After his death, Yagya's body was established among the stars. After narrating the tale of destruction of Daksha's Yagya, sage Pulastya then goes on to tell Narad that the names of the zodiacs had been given just according to their appearances for e.g. Aries (Mesh) appeared like a ram. Similarly, Taurus (Vrishabh) appeared like an ox and so on.

6.3 Tales of Demons

This chapter contains 6 sections:

6.3.1 Andhak – The Demon King

Sage Narad was curious to know how the demon King Andhak behaved with the deities. He asked Pulastya in this regard. Pulastya replied- "After ascending the throne, Andhak did a severe penance to please Lord Shiva and received a boon according to which he could neither be killed by the deities nor by any mortal. He also received another boon according to which even fire could not burn him.

Andhak appointed Shukracharya as his chief priest. He defeated the deities and had gained control over the whole earth. Once, Andhak had gone to see the beautiful sight of Sumeru Mountain. Indra after making adequate arrangements for the security of his capital Amravati came forward to fight him with a huge army. A fierce battle was fought between both the armies. The whole atmosphere was covered in darkness due to the dust. It became difficult for the warriors of both the sides to distinguish between friend and an enemy. The whole battlefield was strewn with dead bodies and blood.

Indra unleashed a volley of arrows towards Andhak. In reply, Andhak too retaliated by unleashing a volley of arrows towards Indra. In this duel, both of them got injured. Infuriated, Indra attacked him with his Vajra, which destroyed all of Andhak's weapons. Indra's Vajra then chased Andhak who jumped down

from his chariot to save his life. Andhak defended himself by attacking it with his fist. As a result, it fell on the ground. Indra then attacked Andhak by unleashing a volley of arrows in his direction. Andhak dodged the assault and ran towards him menacingly. He attacked Airavat- the elephant and mount of Indra with such force that it became paralysed. Seeing his elephant in such a pitiable condition, Indra picked up his Vajra and ran inside the fort to save himself. Andhak then single-handedly destroyed Indra's whole army.

Yamaraj was fighting from the deities' side. He attacked Prahlad who was fighting from Andhak's side. It became impossible for Yamaraj to match Prahlad's valour and bravery. As a result, he was forced to flee from the battlefield. Inspite of having mighty warriors like Varun and Agni in their ranks, the deities could not match the valour of the demon's army, which comprised of valiant and brave fighters like Virochan, Maya and Shambar. Ultimately, the deities were defeated in this battle. The victorious demon King Andhak returned to Paatal loka with his army.

6.3.2 Sukeshi's Queries

Sukeshi was the son of demon King Vidyutkeshi. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Being pleased by his devotion, Lord Shiva had blessed him with invincibility and gifted him a city, which was situated in the sky. Sukeshi was a virtuous and just king.

Once, he had gone into the Magadh forest where he found numerous sages engrossed in meditation. After introducing himself to the sages, he expressed his desire to know about the path that led to benediction. He also wanted to know how a man could achieve respectability and contentment in his life. The sages told him that a man could achieve benediction only by following the path of Dharma. "A religious man achieves both respectability and contentment", said the sages. Sukeshi then asked them about the characteristics of Dharma. The sages revealed to him that the deities engage themselves in religious activities like Yagya, self-study, study of Vedas and worship of Lord Vishnu. So, all these activities are the Dharma of the deities. "The Dharma of the demons consists of negative qualities like jealousy etc. But they have profound knowledge in policy matters and have great devotion towards Shiva", said the sages. "The Siddha's Dharma is to engage himself in activities like practice of Yoga, study of Vedas, self-realisation and devotion to both Lord Vishnu and Shiva", said the sages. In this way, the sages enlightened Sukeshi on the Dharma of different sections of divine entities.

At last, Sukeshi requested the sages to tell something about the hell (Narak). The sages replied that altogether there were 21 hells. The name of the first hell is Raurav, which covers the area of 2000 Yojans. The second hell Maharaurav is twice the area of Raurav. Similarly, the names of the remaining hells are Taamistra, Andhataamistra, Kaalchakra, Aprathisth, Ghatiyantra, Asipatravan, Taptakumbh, Kootshaalmali, Karpatra, Swabhojan, Sandansh, Lohapind,

Kalmasikta, Kshaarnadi, Krimibhojan, Vaitarninadi, Shonitpayabhojan, Kshuraagradhaar, Nishitachakra and Sanshoshan.

6.3.3 Sinful Deeds

Sukeshi asked the sages about the sinful deeds, which leads to hell. The sages replied- "People who condemn Veda, deities, Brahmins etc. go to hell. Those who don't believe in religious texts like Puraan etc. or those who cause obstacles in the accomplishment of Yagya or those who prevent a charitable man from giving donation also go to hell.

People who torment others, who steal sandals etc. go to the hell named Kalmsikta. Disobedient children who don't obey their parents and elders go to the hell named Aprathisth. People who touch their elders with their feet go to Raurav Narak. A selfish person who nourishes himself during drought without caring about his relatives go to the hell named Swabhojan. A person who does not protect people who have taken his refuge goes to the hell named Yantrapeed. A man who misappropriates the deposited money of other people goes to Vrishchikashan Narak. The sinners who copulate on auspicious days or who have illicit relations with other women go to the hell named Shaalmali.

This way, the sages told Sukeshi about various types of sinful deeds, which led sinners to different hells.

6.3.4 Jambudweep and Bharatvarsh

Sukeshi expressed his desire to the sages to know about Jambudweep. The sages replied- "Jambudweep is a very large island. It is sub-divided into nine parts. Ilavritvarsh is situated in its central part while Bhadraashvavarsh is situated towards its eastern side. Some prominent places situated around it are- Hiranyakvarsh towards north-east, Kinnarvarsh towards south-east, Bharatvarsh towards south, Harivarsh towards south-west, Ketumaalvarsh towards west, Ramyakvarsh towards north-west and Kuruvarsh towards north. All these nine Varshas are full of natural beauty. The inhabitants of all the eight Varshas except India are never troubled by old age or death. The inhabitants are also religious and virtuous by nature. They attain great accomplishment without making any real effort.

Bharatvarsh has nine sub-islands. All these islands are surrounded by oceans on all sides and it is difficult to go from one island to another. These sub-islands are Indradweep, Kaserumaan, Taamravarna, Gabhastimaan, Naagdweep, Karaaha, Sinhal, Vaarun and Kumar. Kiraat live towards east of Bharatvarsh while Yavan live towards the west. People living towards the south of Bharatvarsh are called Andhra and those living towards the north are called Turuyak. Bharatvarsh is mainly inhabited by people belonging to all the major four castes i.e. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The seven prominent mountains situated within Bharatvarsh are Mahendra, Malay, Sahya, Shukti, Maanriksh, Vindhya and Paariyaatra though there are many more mountains.

The following rivers originate from Himalaya Mountain- Saraswati, Yamuna, Hiranvati, Sutlej, Chandrika, Neela, Vitastaa, Eravati, Kuhu, Devika, Ushira, Dhaataki, Rasaa, Gomti, Gandki, Kaushiki, Sarayu etc. Similarly, many rivers originate from the other mountains.

6.3.5 Dashaang Dharma

The sages say- "Dharma consists of ten properties such as non-violence, truth, charity, not stealing the property of others, forgiveness, self-restraint, cleanliness etc. Hence it is known as Dashaang Dharma. These properties are obligatory for people belonging to all castes and creeds. A Brahmin's life is categorised into four Ashrams- Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanprastha and Sanyaas. A Brahmachari is supposed to acquire knowledge by living a celibate life. After completing his studies, the Brahmachari graduates to the life of a householder. He gets married and performs his duties towards his family. After this, he enters into Vanprasthashram where he is required to go to the forest after abandoning worldly pleasures. At last, he accepts Sanyaas, which is total renunciation. He is supposed to pass the rest of his life doing meditation and penance."

6.3.6 The Rise and Fall of Sukeshi's Kingdom

Pulastya says- "After being enlightened by the sages on various subjects, Sukeshi returned to his capital. He taught the demons all that he had learnt. As a result, all the demons became very virtuous. The newly attained virtuosity and religiousness made the demons invincible and powerful. Sukeshi's capital was situated in the sky. The whole city illumined brightly due to virtuosity attained by the demons. Its illumination even subdued the radiance of Surya (Sun). Now it became very difficult to determine when the Sun rose.

The deity Surya became worried at this development. He started pondering on how the demons became so powerful and contemplated over the means to destroy the demons. While Surya was meditating, the fact regarding the demons' power dawned on him. Surya became furious and angrily glanced at Sukeshi. The city started falling towards earth. Sukeshi became worried and started praying to Lord Shiva. Seeing his devotee, Sukeshi in trouble, Lord Shiva looked angrily at Surya as a result of which, he too started falling towards the earth. When the sages and hermits saw Surya falling down, they advised him to take refuge in Lord Vishnu. Surya curiously asked as to how could he take Vishnu's refuge as he had been punished by Lord Shiva. The sages then advised him to direct his descent to Varanasi. Surya accepted their advice and landed at Varanasi between two rivers- Varuna and Asi. He was feeling restless because of severe heat and so he decided to take a bath in the Asi River. After taking his bath, he started revolving around both the rivers. In the meantime, all the sages, demons, Apsaras went to Brahma loka and requested Lord Brahma to re-establish Surya in his original abode. Lord Brahma, accompanied by all the deities went to Lord Shiva and requested him to forgive Surya. Shiva was pleased at their humbleness and forgave Surya and re-established him on his

chariot. He also gave a new name to Surya- Lolaark. At last, Surya was re-established in the sky.

6.4 Tales of Nar-Narayana

This chapter contains 3 sections:

6.4.1 Manifestation of Nar-Narayana

Sage Pulastya says- "Dharma, the possessor of divine body and who manifested from the heart of Lord Brahma married Murti, the daughter of Daksha. Four sons were born to them- Hari, Krishna, Nara and Narayan. Hari and Krishna engaged themselves in the practice of Yoga while Nar and Narayan went to the Himalaya Mountain and started doing penance for the welfare of humans.

Indra became frightened by their arduous penance. He feared that he might lose his authority and power. He sent beautiful Apsaras to disturb their penance. He himself went to that site accompanied by Kamadev and Vasant (spring).

6.4.2 Prahlad meets Nar-Narayana

One Narayan saw all three of them coming and he treated all of them with respect. As he was aware of the reasons for their arrival, he decided to give them a surprise. He made the figure of a beautiful woman on his thigh with a flower. The next moment, the figure transformed into a live woman, which surprised all of them.

For Kamadev, the beautiful woman resembled his wife Rati. He became so infatuated by her beauty that he forgot about the actual purpose of his visit. The same thing happened to Vasant and all the Apsaras. Everybody who had come with the desire of victory had actually become a victim.

Seeing all of them surprised and amazed, Narayan told them that the beautiful woman was created by him from his thigh. He also instructed them to take away that beautiful woman to heaven. Kamadev and Vasant were captivated by Narayan's power. They also became terrified. They went back to heaven accompanied by Urvashi and narrated the whole story to Indra. Even Indra was amazed. In a short time, the amazing deeds of Narayan spread in all the directions and the various lokas.

Once, Prahlad- the son of demon King Hiranyakashipu asked sage Chyavan about the most revered and sacred place of pilgrimage in the whole world. Sage Chyavan told him about Naimisharanya- the most sacred place of pilgrimage on the earth. Prahlad visited Naimisharanya accompanied by many other demons. After reaching there, all of them took bath in a river. While roaming about in the city, Prahlad saw the trunk of a tree pierced with numerous arrows. Not far from the tree, he saw two hermits doing penance. Two divine bows and a pair of quiver were lying by the side.

Prahlad was amazed as to why the hermits would require weapons. He revealed his thoughts to the hermits. Both the hermits replied that a person who works according to his capabilities, earns respect. Prahlad became angry at their reply. He asked them as to what were their capabilities. Actually, the hermits were none other than Nar and Narayan. Both of them told Prahlad that they were invincible and nobody could defeat them in battle. Prahlad's anger crossed all limits. A tremendous battle ensued between Prahlad and Nar-Narayan.

6.4.3 Prahlad blessed by Nar-Narayana

A ferocious battle was fought between Prahlad and Nar-Narayan in which all types of lethal weapons were used. The battle continued for 1000 divine years. Ultimately, Prahlad was defeated in this battle. He went to Vaikunth and asked Lord Vishnu as to why Nar-Narayan was invincible. Lord Vishnu revealed to them that Narayan was his own incarnation. He also told them that Narayan could be won only by devotion and not by power.

Prahlad decided to relinquish his throne and appointed Andhak as his successor. He went to Badrikashrama and made salutations to Narayan in reverence. Narayan was surprised at the sudden change in his behaviour. He asked Prahlad as to what the matter was. Prahlad then said- "Who can defeat you? You are none other than Lord Janardan. You are the one who has taken incarnation of Hrishikesh, Chakrapaani and Hayagreev."

Narayan was pleased by his devotion. He told Narayan that though he was not able to defeat him in the battle but he was successful in doing so by his devotion. Narayan also blessed Prahlad. Prahlad then returned to his capital. Andhak expressed his desire to make Prahlad the king once again but it was turned down by him. Prahlad spent the rest of his life preaching on the virtues of religiousness and truthfulness.

6.5 Manifestation of Vegetation from the Deities

Pulastya says- "Lotus flower manifested from Vishnu's navel in the month of Ashwin. Similarly, other vegetation also manifested from the different organs of the deities- Kadamb tree from the palm of Kamadev, Dhatura tree from the heart of Lord Shiva, Khair tree from the middle portion of Brahma's body, Kataiya tree from Vishwakarma's body.

Kundalata manifested from Parvati's palm, Sinduar tree from Ganesha's belly, Palaash tree and Gular tree from the right and left armpits of Yamaraj.

Similarly, Sarpat manifested from the body of Sheshnaag, black and white Durva grass from the tail and back of Vaasuki Naag, Harichandan tree manifested from the heart of a devotee.

6.6 Mahishasura

This chapter contains 4 sections:

6.6.1 Mahishasura's Atrocities

During ancient times, there lived two demons- Rambh and Karambh who would torment people. As both were sonless, they decided to do severe penance by keeping their bodies submerged in Panchmad River with a desire of having sons. Indra becoming fearful, took the guise of a crocodile and killed Karambh while he was doing penance in the river.

Rambh became so dejected by his brother's death that he decided to give up his life by severing his head and offering it in the sacrificial fire. As he was about to turn his thoughts into reality, Agni appeared before him and prevented him from doing so and said- "Killing oneself is a grave sin. Don't give up your life. I am willing to fulfil any of your wish."

Rambh was pleased and requested Agni to bless him with a mighty and powerful son. Agni blessed him by saying- "You will beget a son from a woman of your own choice. But destiny had something else in store for him.

Once, Rambh had gone to see Yaksha King- Maalvat. He was impressed by Maalvat's prosperity and unlimited wealth. King Maalvat possessed lot of animal wealth like goats, lambs, oxen, elephant, horses, cows etc. Rambh saw a beautiful buffalo in the cowshed. He started caressing her body just to appreciate her beauty. The buffalo got aroused and forced Rambh to copulate with her and this resulted in the buffalo's pregnancy.

Rambh returned to Paatal loka accompanied by the buffalo. But the other demons came to know about this unusual incident and as a result, Rambh was excommunicated from the demons' tribe. Both of them decided to return to Yaksha King Maalvat's palace. In due course of time, the buffalo gave birth to a beautiful calf, which could change its appearance according to its wishes.

Once, seeing the buffalo alone, a bull tried to breach her modesty. The buffalo ran towards Rambh for her safety. Rambh attacked the bull with a sword and injured it. In retaliation, the bull also dashed its horns against Rambh's chest, which proved to be fatal. Seeing the dead Rambh, the buffalo became engulfed in sorrow. She had no other option but to take refuge of the Yakshas who protected her life. In the meantime, the seriously injured bull fell into a divine lake and died. Amazingly, its body transformed into a demon.

The Yakshas decided to cremate Rambh's body. The buffalo too decided to embrace death by jumping into the burning pyre. But as soon as the pyre was lit, a ferocious demon emerged from it with a sword. He drove away all the Yakshas and killed the buffalo but spared her calf. This ferocious demon later on became famous as Raktabeej. He had defeated all the deities including Indra, Rudra, Surya and Marut. But the calf, which became famous as Mahishasura was even mightier than Raktabeej. All the defeated demons had

accepted him as their leader and he was crowned as their king. Mahishasura defeated all the deities and drove them out from heaven.

The defeated deities accompanied by Brahma went to Lord Vishnu and narrated their woes to him. Lord Shiva too was present there. Both of them became furious after hearing the atrocities committed by Mahishasura. Divine effulgence appeared from the mouth of all the angry deities. These effulgence got collected at a place resulting in the manifestation of Goddess Katyayani.

All the deities presented their weapons to her- Lord Shiva gave his trident, Lord Vishnu gave his chakra, Agni gave his Shakti etc. After acquiring all the weapons, Goddess Durga thundered loudly. The deities eulogised her after which she proceeded towards Vindhya Mountain mounted on her lion. Vindhya Mountain had been cursed by sage Agastya as a result of which, its enormous size turned into a hill. The tale behind this curse is as follows- In the ancient times, Vindhya Mountain was so high that it became very difficult for the Sun to make its movement. The Sun went to sage Agastya and requested him to minimise the size of Vindhya Mountain. Sage Agastya went near the Vindhya Mountain and said- "I am going on a pilgrimage but you are coming in my way. Since I am an old man, it is impossible for me to climb your steep slopes. I request you to reduce your size and remain in the same position till I return from my pilgrimage otherwise you will have to face my wrath."

Vindhya Mountain accepted his request and turned into a hill. Sage Agastya then proceeded on his pilgrimage towards south but did not return according to his promise. He constructed a magnificent hermitage and asked Lopamudra- the daughter of Vidarbha King to stay there and himself returned to his hermitage. Vindhya Mountain remained in that position waiting for sage Agastya's arrival. This way, sage Agastya solved the problem of the Sun.

Goddess Durga chose this very mountain to launch her assault. All the deities, Siddhas, Nagas, Apsaras etc. were present with her.

6.6.2 The Demons – Chand and Mund

Once, the demon brothers, Chand and Mund were passing near the Vindhya Mountain when they saw Goddess Chandika there. Both these demons were stunned by her divine beauty. They had never seen such a beautiful woman in their life. They went to Mahishasura and told him about her beauty.

Mahishasura proceeded with a huge army, which comprised of valiant commanders like Vidaalnetra, Vishang, Vaayakal, Agraayudh, Chikshur, Raktabeej etc. The army assembled at the foothills of Vindhya Mountain. There, Mahishasura instructed Dundubhi to go and bring Goddess Durga by any means.

Dundubhi went to Goddess Durga and boasted about Mahishasura's might and power by saying- "The mighty Mahishasura has defeated all the deities who ran

out from heaven to save their lives. He is lord of all the three worlds and is invincible but this victorious and mighty king has been enslaved by your beauty. You must not miss this chance of marrying him."

Goddess Durga replied- "I am aware of Mahishasura's feats. I am most willing to marry him. But there is one problem. There is a tradition in our clan according to which an aspiring husband is required to give a Shulk (tax) in lieu of getting married." Dundubhi was happy thinking that it would not be difficult for Mahishasura to fulfil her demand. He said- "Mahishasura can even give up his life for your sake."

Hearing this, Goddess Durga laughed loudly and said- "O demon! According to the tradition of our clan, only such a person can marry a woman who defeats her in the battle." Dundubhi went back to Mahishasura and narrated the whole story. Mahishasura instructed Chikshur to go and bring Goddess Durga after enslaving her. Chikshur proceeded with a huge army. Seeing him coming in the direction of Goddess Durga, Lord Brahma instructed her to use an armour to protect herself. The Goddess refused by saying- "No demon can stand before me in a battle."

All the deities then chanted Vishnupanjar Stotra for her safety. Protected by the Stotra, she was successful in killing many demons. Seeing his devastated army, Mahishasura himself came to fight her.

6.6.3 Killing of Mahishasura

Narad asked sage Pulastya as to how Goddess Durga kill Mahishasura. Sage Pulastya replied- "After the killing of Chikshur, Mahishasura sent Namar to fight Goddess Durga. Namar proceeded towards the Vindhya Mountain accompanied by a huge battalion. After reaching there, he shot a volley of arrows towards the Vindhya Mountain. As a result, the whole mountain was covered by innumerable arrows. This defiant act of Namar made Goddess Durga extremely furious. She attacked her enemies menacingly. She killed some of the demons by her sword, some with her mace and many more were killed by her arrows. Even her mount- Simha killed many demons. The demons were completely surprised by the ferociousness of the attack and fled from the battlefield.

Seeing his whole army fleeing from the battlefield, Namar came forward, mounted on an elephant to fight Goddess Durga. He unleashed his devastating weapon- Shakti towards her. At the same time, he also attacked her mount- Simha (lion) by releasing many arrows towards it. But Goddess Durga destroyed all the weapons. In the meantime, the elephant held the Simha with its trunk but the Goddess's mount somehow released itself from the trap and attacked Namar. Namar fell from the elephant and died.

After Namar's death, Chikshur came to fight the Goddess but both his hands and legs were severed by her. Ultimately, Goddess Durga severed his head as a result of which, Chikshur died. The news of Chikshur's death spread like a

wildfire. Many more valiant commanders of Mahishasura's army came forward to fight her but all of them were vanquished.

At last, Mahishasura came forward to fight Goddess Durga in the guise of a buffalo. Goddess Durga started playing her damru (small drum) and Veena, which resulted into the emergence of numerous ghosts. He attacked the ghosts with his horns, four legs and by violently lashing his tail. He then attacked Durga's mount- Simha and his violent movements shook even the earth and the mountain. Goddess Durga grabbed his neck with the help of a noose. The next moment, Mahishasura transformed his appearance into an elephant. Goddess Durga then severed his trunk. Mahishasura again changed his guise into a buffalo. Goddess Durga attacked him by unleashing various weapons but the demon escaped unhurt.

Goddess Durga suddenly jumped down from her mount- Simha and climbed upon Mahishasura, who was in the guise of a buffalo. Mahishasura started jumping violently. Goddess Durga pressed Mahishasura's back with such force that he suffocated. She then severed his head. Suddenly, Mahishasura appeared in human form with a sword. Goddess Durga kicked him on his chest and again severed his head. The news of his death created havoc in his army and the demons fled from the battlefield and hid themselves in Paatal loka.

The deities became pleased at Mahishasura's death and eulogised Goddess Durga. She became pleased and after assuring the deities of taking re-incarnation for their welfare, disappeared from the scene.

6.6.4 Reincarnation of Goddess Durga

Revealing the reasons for Goddess Durga's re-incarnation, sage Pulastya says- "Goddess Durga is also known as Kaushiki as she had manifested from the cell (Koshika) of Uma's (Parvati's) body. After the manifestation, she went to Vindhya Mountain with the objective of killing the demons- Shumbh and Nishumbh. She was accompanied by numerous Bhoot ganas (spirits).

After Sati's death, Rudra engaged himself in penance and became a celibate. He had even relinquished his responsibility of leading the deities' army. When Mahishasura came to know that the deities were bereft of their commander, he attacked them as a result of which, the deities were defeated. The deities went to Lord Vishnu who was at that time living at Shwetdweep. When they reached there, they were surprised to find that Lord Vishnu was aware of their defeat. Lord Vishnu then advised them by saying- "All of you must go to Mena-Maanasputri of Agnishwat and request her to give consent to marry Himalaya. The same Mena would give birth to a beautiful girl who in reality would be the re-incarnation of Sati. All of you must go to Kurukshetra and eulogise her on the night of Amavasya."

The deities were curious to know about the origin of Kurukshetra. Lord Vishnu told them- "During the initial phase of Satya Yuga, there was a mighty king

named Riksh, who was the descendant of Soma. Samvaran was the son of Riksh. He succeeded his father at a young age. Samvaran was a great devotee of mine. Vashishth- the son of Varun was his chief priest and had taught him all the Vedas. One day, Samvaran went to the forest for hunting after entrusting his responsibilities to Vashishth. After reaching the forest, he started wandering in search of his game. He saw a beautiful lake full of numerous lotus flowers. He also saw many Apsaras and other divine beauties enjoying themselves by singing and dancing. Samvaran was infatuated by the divine beauty of one of those Apsaras- Tapti, who was the most beautiful among them. Coincidentally, Tapti too saw Samvaran staring at her. She was so infatuated by Samvaran's handsomeness that she fell unconscious. She was carried by her companions back home.

After returning to his capital, Vashishth was surprised to find change in Samvaran's behaviour. It seemed as if his mind was pre-occupied by something. By his Yogic power, Vashishth came to know about the whole incident. He decided to take the help of Tapti's father- Surya. He went to Surya and requested him to marry Tapti with Samvaran. Surya did not want to annoy his esteemed guest, so he gave his consent. Vashishth then returned to his hermitage accompanied by Tapti and ultimately Tapti and Samvaran got married.

6.7 Tales of King Kuru and Kurukshetra

In course of time, Tapti gave birth to a son, who possessed all the signs of royalty. After growing up, he mastered all the four Vedas and other scriptures within a very short period. At the raw age of 24, he became a scholar. When he attained marriageable age, he was married to Saudamini- the daughter of Sudama. Later on, he was appointed as the successor by his father, Samvaran.

After becoming the king, Kuru ruled his subjects in a just manner but very soon he got bored of his monotonous life. He knew that only those kings became immortal who accomplished amazing feats. He decided to do something for which people would remember him. With the objective of making his name immortal, he went to the most sacred place called Samantpanchak and decided to cultivate the eight virtues - Tapa, Satya, Kshama, Daya, Shauch, Daan, Yuga and Brahmacharya on its barren land. He started ploughing a piece of land with a golden plough, which was pulled by Lord Shankar's bull and Yamaraj's buffalo named Paundrak.

While he was busy ploughing the field, Indra approached him and asked suspiciously as to what he was trying to cultivate. When Kuru revealed his intentions, Indra made fun of him and went back. But Kuru was not worried and continued to cultivate the land. In a very short time, he had already cultivated the land measuring 7 kosas. One day, Lord Vishnu arrived and asked the same question, which Indra had asked. When Kuru revealed his intentions, Lord Vishnu was surprised and wondered as to from where he would get the seeds to grow these things. Kuru told him that all these eight virtues were present in his

own body and it would not be a difficult task to cultivate these things. Lord Vishnu wanted to test his commitment and sincerity and said- "Give the seeds to me. I would sow the seeds while you should plough the field."

Kuru outstretched his right hand but Lord Vishnu cut it into thousands of pieces with his chakra. All the pieces were distributed among the deities but Kuru was unfazed and again stretched his left hand towards Lord Vishnu. But his left hand too met the same fate. In this way, the most generous and benevolent King Kuru offered all his organs to Lord Vishnu. But all the organs were severed by Lord Vishnu. At last, Kuru offered his head as he had nothing else to offer. Lord Vishnu was pleased by his generosity and asked him to demand anything. Kuru replied- "All the area cultivated by me should become famous as a sacred pilgrimage. All the devotees who visit or die at this sacred pilgrimage must attain salvation. This place should be known by my name."

This is how the most sacred place of pilgrimage- Kurukshetra came into existence.

6.8 Bali – The Demon King

This chapter contains 7 sections:

Lomaharshan told the sages- "Bali was the descendant of Virochan and the son of Hiranyakashipu. After his father's death, he defeated the deities and drove them out from their abodes. Very soon, all the three worlds were under his control. He was a virtuous king and so were his subjects. During his reign, every corner in his kingdom would be abuzz with religious activities. As a result, the whole world became devoid of sin."

One day, Goddess Lakshmi arrived and said- "O brave king of the demons! I am pleased by your valiance with which you fought and vanquished the deities. This is the reason why I have come on my own will to bless you." After saying this, Goddess Lakshmi merged with his body. This way, Bali acquired all the splendours of the world.

6.8.1 Deities go to Brahma Loka

The sages asked- "How were the deities able to defeat Bali and why did Lord Vishnu take the incarnation of Vaaman?" Lomaharshan replied- "After being defeated by Bali, Indra went to Meru Mountain where his mother Aditi lived and narrated the woeful tale of the deities' defeat. Aditi took her husband's (Kashyap's) advice in this regard. Kashyap thought that only Lord Brahma could solve their problem. So, he went to Brahma loka accompanied by the deities.

When they reached there, they found numerous Brahmins engaged in religious activities. Lord Brahma too was sitting among them. Sage Kashyap and all the deities made salutations to Lord Brahma and stood silently.

6.8.2 The Deities do Penance

Lord Brahma told the deities that he was aware of their plight. He was of the opinion that the mighty Bali could be defeated only by the Almighty himself and nobody else. Lord Brahma said- "You must go to a place called Amrit, which is situated towards the north of Ksheersagar. The Almighty God is engaged in an austere penance at that place. All of you must go there and try to please him by doing penance and after he is pleased, just request him to take his next incarnation as Aditi's son."

Sage Kashyap and all the deities agreed to follow Brahma's advice. All of them proceeded towards Shwetdweep. When they reached there, they were amazed to find the place devoid of any creature. Its boundary seemed limitless and even the Sun's rays could not reach it. Sage Kashyap initiated all the deities into the austerity named Kaamad- fulfiller of all the desires. After that, all of them commenced their severe penance.

6.8.3 Lord Narayana Blesses Kashyap

Lord Narayan became pleased by Kashyap's eulogies and austere penance. He appeared before the deities and asked them to demand anything they wished for. Kashyap requested him to give Aditi, the privilege of becoming his mother. Lord Vishnu agreed to take birth as Aditi's son.

The deities became pleased and all of them proceeded back towards Kashyap's hermitage. When they reached Kurukshetra, the place where Kashyap had his hermitage, they inspired Aditi to commence her penance to please Lord Vishnu. Aditi did a severe penance for 10,000 years. The place where she did her penance later on became famous as Aditivan. Lord Vishnu was extremely pleased by her devotion.

6.8.4 Lord Vishnu Appears

Lomaharshan says- Lord Vishnu appeared and told her that he was most willing to fulfil her wish. Aditi requested him to make her son- Indra, the lord of all the three worlds once again. Lord Vishnu assured her that he would take birth as her son and kill all the demons.

Aditi had apprehensions as to how she could bear the weight of Almighty God in her womb. But Lord Vishnu assured her by saying- "Don't worry. I will give you the strength to do that. In course of time, Aditi became pregnant. But soon after her pregnancy, the earth shook violently because of the unbearable weight of the foetus. Wherever she went, that particular portion of earth tilted down because of the enormous weight. Her pregnancy had significantly eroded the radiance of the demons.

6.8.5 Bali’s Queries to Prahlad

Lomaharshan says- "When Bali saw the demons becoming devoid of radiance and power, he enquired about the reasons from his grandfather, Prahlad. He wondered whether it was a bad omen. Prahlad went into a deep trance and saw

the whole earth shaking violently. He also saw high tides rising in the ocean. He was convinced that these signs went to prove the inevitable emergence of the deities' power. Prahlad then meditated upon Lord Vishnu and found him manifesting in Aditi's womb as a Vaaman (dwarf). He also saw the whole universe existing in his body. Prahlad was surprised but the next moment he controlled himself and told Bali- "Now I know the reason why the demons have become devoid of their radiance and power. Lord Hari is about to take incarnation as the son of Aditi and this is the reason why all the demons have become powerless."

Bali curiously asked Prahlad- "Who is this Hari, the tormentor of the demons? Why should we be scared of him as we have many valiant demons who could defeat him easily." Prahlad became furious at Bali's utterances and cursed him by saying- "How dare you say like this! I am ashamed that you have taken birth as my grandson. I curse you to lose your kingdom and fall from grace because you have criticised Lord Vishnu- the supreme saviour."

6.8.6 Manifestation of Lord Vaaman

Bali felt sorry for hurting Prahlad's feelings. He said- "Dear grandfather! My intelligence has been overshadowed by my arrogant attitude. You have done the right thing by cursing me. I am not scared of losing all my prosperity and splendour but your anger is unbearable for me."

Now even Prahlad realised that he had committed a mistake by cursing his own son. He said- "Unable to control my anger, I cursed you but now nothing can be done and my words will definitely come true. But don't worry as my blessings would help you to become a supreme devotee of Hari and you would be protected by him."

Lomaharshan says- "In course of time, Lord Vishnu took birth as Vaaman. This incident of Vishnu's birth had liberated Aditi and all the deities from their sorrow. Lord Brahma appeared and performed Vaaman's Jaatkarm. He also eulogised Vaaman and worshipped him. Lord Vishnu was pleased by his eulogy and revealed to him that he took the incarnation of Vaaman to make Indra, the lord of all the three worlds."

Lord Brahma was pleased and presented a black coloured deer skin to him. Similarly, sages like Marichi, Vashishth, Brihaspati, Angira etc. presented Palaash Danda, kamandalu, sacred thread and silken clothes respectively. Lord Vaaman then proceeded towards the place where King Bali was performing his oblation. Lord Vaaman was in the appearance of a hermit. Though he was of diminutive size, yet each of his steps were enough to shake the earth.

6.8.7 Lord Vaaman's Demands

Lomaharshan says- "The shaking and trembling of earth surprised Bali and he enquired about this strange happening to Shukracharya. He was also surprised by the fact that Agni was not accepting the offerings. Shukracharya, after

contemplating for a while on this matter, came to know about Vaaman's incarnation. He informed Bali that Vaaman was on his way to the oblation site and his each step was causing turbulence on the earth.

Bali was pleased that he would get an opportunity to see the Almighty God whom the sages contemplate upon. He was proud of his good fortune that the lord was paying him a visit. Shukracharya aware of the reason for Vaaman's arrival warned Bali against making any promise to him. Bali replied- "How can I refuse if the Almighty God demands anything from me? I am willing to face any hardship to safeguard my benevolent image. I don't mind if the deities get benefited by my actions. Even if the lord is coming with the intention of killing me, I am not scared as that is how I would attain salvation. Come what may, I am not going to abandon my charitable nature."

As the conversation between Shukracharya and Bali continued, suddenly, Lord Vaaman arrived at the site. Vaaman's radiance subdued the power of all demons present there. Lord Vaaman being impressed by the grandeur of Vaaman's Yagya complimented him for organising such a magnificent Yagya. Bali eulogised and worshipped his esteemed guest. He requested Vaaman to reveal the reason of his arrival and promised that his wishes would be fulfilled. Lord Vaaman smiled and told him that he needed a small piece of land measured by three steps for the performance of Yagya. Bali was surprised by this demand and requested him to ask for more land but Lord Vaaman told him that he needed only that much land.

Bali agreed and took a vow to donate a piece of land measured by three steps. Hardly had Bali taken his vow, when suddenly Lord Vaaman expanded his size. His first step covered the whole earth. By his two successive steps, he covered the two worlds. This way, Bali was forced to donate all the three worlds according to his vow. Lord Vishnu then made Indra, the king of all the three worlds and sent Bali to the nether world named Sutal. He blessed Bali by saying- "You would enjoy a long life till the end of this present Kalpa. You would hold the post of Indra till the arrival of Saavarni Manavantar. As long as you remain supportive of the Brahmins and the deities, you would enjoy all the pleasures of life. But if you go against their wishes then you would be fastened by Varun's noose."

6.9 Sarasvati River

The sages requested Lomaharshan to reveal about river Saraswati's origin, which flowed in Kurukshetra. Lomaharshan said- "Saraswati originates from Paakad tree (Indian fig tree). She enters Dwaitvan after passing through numerous mountains. While describing about her majesty, sage Markandeya felt that Saraswati was the source from, which everything originated- all the three worlds, three Vedas, Vidya (learning), heavenly bodies like Sun, Moon etc. Once, sage Markandeya eulogised Saraswati by saying- "O Saraswati! You manifest in the form of cryptic mantra- "OMKAR". You are the eternal form

through which the Almighty God (Brahma) manifests himself in different appearances."

Saraswati was pleased by his devotion and said- "O Brahmin! I am willing to go wherever you want to take me." According to Markandeya, river Saraswati was initially known as Brahmasar. Later on, she became famous as Ramhalad. Sage Markandeya requested Saraswati to flow in the territory of Kurukshetra where sage Kuru was doing his penance. This way, Saraswati diverted her course towards Kurukshetra.

6.10Kurukshetra

The sages requested Lomaharshan to describe about the geographical condition of Kurukshetra. Lomaharshan replied- "There are 7 different forest ranges in Kurukshetra. They are- "Kamyakvan, Aditivan, Vyasavan, Phalkivan, Suryavan, Madhuvan and Sheetvan. Nine rivers flow across Kurukshetra- Saraswati, Vaitarni, Aashga, Mandakini Ganga, Madhustrava, Vaasu, Kaushiki, Kaggar and Hiranyavati. Kurukshetra is believed to be the most sacred place of pilgrimage. A pilgrim visiting Kurukshetra should begin his pilgrimage only after worshipping the Yaksha. He should then pay a visit to the famous Aditivan where Aditi had accomplished a severe penance to get a son. By doing this, he is blessed with sons possessing all the good qualities. After that, he should pay a visit to a place called Savan where Lord Hari dwells. A devotee who pays a visit to Lord Vimaleshwar becomes liberated from all his sins and goes to Rudraloka after his death. Some other places of pilgrimage situated in Kurukshetra and which are considered to be very sacred are Paritlav, Kaushiki, Dharani, Daksha's hermitage, Shaalukini, Sarpeedadhi, the temples at the bank of Panchnad river, Vaaraha temple, Someshwar temple etc."

"A devotee should also pay a visit to Ramkunda where Parashuram had constructed five ponds and filled them up with the blood of the Kshatriyas, whom he had killed. He had pacified the soul of his ancestors by performing Tarpan with the blood of the dead Kshatriyas. The dead ancestors were pleased with him and blessed him in becoming free from the sins, which he had acquired because of killing Kshatriyas."

6.11Sage Mankanak Eulogizes Shiva

Sage Mankanak was the Manasputra of Kashyap. He had seven sons, who were famously known as Marud Ganas. They are the one who hold all the movable and immovable objects of this world.

Once, sage Mankanak injured his finger by the sharp edge of Kusha grass while he was trying to pluck them for his religious rites. But he was quite surprised when he found vegetative juice (Shaak Rasa) oozing out from the wound instead of blood. He thought that perhaps his blood had transformed into vegetative juice by the virtue of his penance. This abnormal event made him arrogant and he started dancing in joy as a result of which the whole world started to swerve. Lord Brahma became puzzled by this sudden development.

He went to Lord Shiva and requested him to stop Mankanak from dancing so that the universe became steady.

Lord Shiva went to sage Mankanak and said- "O supreme sage! Being a hermit, you are supposed to have control over your emotions. May I know the reason of your extreme joy, which makes you dance." Mankanak told him that his penance had given him great power due to which vegetative juice was oozing out from the wound instead of blood and this was the reason for his extreme joy and happiness. "That is why I am dancing", said Mankanak. But Lord Shiva was not amused and wanted to teach him a lesson. He hit the thumb with the nail of his finger as a result of which, ashes poured out from the wound. Mankanak was surprised by this. Being ashamed, he said- "I know, you are none other than Lord Shiva because nobody else can perform this amazing feat. I am your great devotee. You are the one on whom, deities like Brahma and Vishnu are dependent. I need your blessings so that the virtues of my penance remain intact." Lord Shiva blessed him and promised to dwell in his hermitage forever.

6.12 Some Sacred Places of Pilgrimage

This chapter contains 4 sections:

6.12.1 Aushanas Tirtha

Describing about the greatness of Aushanas, the most sacred place of pilgrimage, Lomaharshan narrates the following tale- "During Treta Yug, Lord Rama had killed many demons while he was in exile. Once, while he was living in Dandak forest, he had severed the head of a wicked demon with his Kshura arrow. The severed head of the demon was carried by the arrow for quite a distance and coincidentally it got stuck on the thigh of sage Rahodar. It became very difficult for him to perform his religious duties. Bad smell emanating from the severed head was unbearable. Some sages advised him to pay a visit to Aushanas to become free from his problem.

Rahodar went to Aushanas and as soon as he touched the holy water of the river, the severed head got detached and fell in the river. Delighted, he went back to his hermitage. From that day, Aushanas also came to be known as Kapaalmochan.

6.12.2 Vashishtha-pavah Tirtha

The sages asked Lomaharshan about the origin of Vashishthapava Tirtha and about the reason why sage Vashishth was carried along by the powerful current of Saraswati river. Lomaharshan said- "There was great rivalry between sage Vashishth and sage Vishwamitra. In course of time, it turned into a bitter enemity. Vashishth had his hermitage at a place called Sthanu Tirtha and Vishwamitra's hermitage was situated just towards the west of it. Vishwamitra was jealous of Vashishth's accomplishment."

Once, Vishwamitra asked river Saraswati to bring Vashishth to his hermitage with the help of powerful currents so that he could kill him. River Saraswati

became sad and refused to obey him, which made Vishwamitra angry. He again repeated his commands. Seeing no other option, she went to Vashishth's hermitage and narrated the whole story to him. Vashishth agreed to be carried away by her current.

When Vishwamitra saw Vashishth, he furiously started looking for some weapon to kill him. Saraswati became scared and carried Vashishth to safety as she did not want to acquire the sin of collaborating in the killing of a Brahmin. Vishwamitra angrily cursed her- "May your water be mixed with blood and may the demons thrive on your banks."

This way, Saraswati flowed with her water mixed with blood for one year. All the sages, deities, Gandharvas and Apsaras were worried at this happening. But, this was not the case with the demons, who lived happily at the bank of river Saraswati thriving on the blood mixed in her water. They used to live happily- dancing and rejoicing, as if they had won the heaven from the deities.

One day, some sages arrived at the bank of river Saraswati and became distressed after seeing her water mixed with blood. They asked her about the reason. She revealed the whole story and the misdeeds of Vishwamitra. The sages then requested river Aruna- the liberator of all sins to change her course and start flowing towards river Saraswati. As soon as river Aruna submerged into river Saraswati, she (Saraswati) regained her purity once again.

6.12.3 Kamyakvan Tirtha

The sages asked Lomaharshan about the origin of Kamyakvan Tirtha. Lomaharshan replied- "Once upon a time, the sages of Naimisharanya came to Kurukshetra to take bath in river Saraswati. But, since they were large in number, the banks of river Saraswati could not accommodate all of them. In their helplessness, they created an imaginary place of pilgrimage named Yagyopavitik Tirtha and took an imaginary dip in it. But many of the remaining sages were unable to do even this."

When Saraswati saw such a large gathering of Brahmins, desirous of having bath in her holy waters, she created a garden (Kunj) and started flowing towards west. This very garden later on developed into a dense forest and became famous as Kamyakvan.

6.12.4 Sthanu Tirtha

The sages then asked Lomaharshan about the origin of Sthanu Tirtha and the importance of Sthanu Vata. They also expressed their desire to know about the reservoir named Saanihitya and how Indra had filled it up with mud. Sage Lomaharshan replied- "Once, Sanat Kumar upon being asked by Baalkhilya and other sages the same question, narrated the following tale- During the period of final annihilation, when the whole earth was submerged in water, Lord Brahma manifested inside an egg. He slept there for thousands of Yugas. When he woke up from his sleep, he found the world devoid of any inhabitants. Being under the

influence of Rajo Guna, he planned to commence his creation. At the same time, Lord Vishnu awakened from his sleep and broke that egg after seeing that the whole world had merged inside him. Subsequently, Lord Brahma began his creation starting from the word- 'OMKAR'. After that, the terms- Bhur, Bhuvah and Swah respectively came into existence. The brilliant effulgence radiating from the egg had dried up the water as a result of which, the remaining water had turned into the shape of an embryo. The reservoir- Saanihitya is situated at the same place where the egg had manifested itself. Meru Mountain is nothing but the outer shell of that egg and all the other mountains are its membrane. The oceans and the rivers are the fluid inside that egg. There is a great reservoir near the navel area of Lord Brahma. A big Banyan tree is situated just in the middle of that reservoir. This tree appears like a pillar (Sthanu). All the three major castes (Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya) originated from that tree. Lord Brahma then created his Manasputras- Sanat, Sanandan etc. Subsequently, he created the Saptarishis and the Baalkhilyas. All the Baalkhilyas did a severe penance for thousands of years without having a morsel of food. They had become very weak but still Lord Shiva was not pleased with them."

Once, Lord Shiva and Uma were travelling by aerial route when suddenly Uma saw the weak Baalkhilyas engaged in penance. She was saddened to see their frail bodies and requested Lord Shiva to end their miseries. Lord Shiva told her that the Baalkhilyas had not attained a bit of virtuousness inspite of their severe penance. "They have still not become free from anger and desires", said Lord Shiva. But Uma was reluctant to believe his words. Lord Shiva then asked her to wait there and himself went to show their real worth to her to prove his point.

Lord Shiva then shed his apparels and became naked. As a mendicant, he visited the hermitages of all the Baalkhilyas. At that time the Baalkhilyas were engaged in penance and hence only womenfolk were present at the hermitages. The womenfolk, infatuated by Lord Shiva, started running after him. When the Baalkhilyas came to know about this, they uprooted his private organ (Linga) and threw it on the ground. Hardly had the Linga fallen on the ground, the whole world got engulfed by the process of destruction. All the sages and learned saints became worried and went to seek Lord Brahma's help. Lord Brahma revealed to them that this destruction was due to Shiva's wrath. He also told them about the futility of their penance as they were still under the influence of anger and lust. "You cannot attain perfection until your flaws are removed", said Lord Brahma.

6.13 Sages Take Lord Shiva’s Refuge

Ashamed, the sages requested Lord Brahma to tell them the way to pacify Lord Shiva. Lord Brahma assured them that they would be forgiven if they took Lord Shiva's refuge. Lord Brahma went to Kailash Parvat accompanied by all the sages. After reaching there, he eulogised Lord Shiva with deep devotion. The sages also worshipped Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva was satisfied by their eulogy and devotion. He instructed the sages to establish the severed Linga at Saanihitya Sarovar. "By doing this, you would have all your desires fulfilled. The Linga would become famous by the name of Sthanu- the whole world. A devotee who pays a visit to this sacred place of pilgrimage would become liberated from all his sins", said Lord Shiva.

The sages returned to the place of Lord Shiva's fallen Linga. They tried their best to lift it but were unsuccessful in their attempt. They became worried and went to Lord Brahma for help. Lord Brahma told them- "Since Shiva's Linga had fallen on his own will, hence nobody except him can lift that Linga." All of them went back to Kailash Parvat but Lord Shiva was nowhere to be found.

Lord Brahma went into a state of deep meditation and sighted Lord Shiva in the guise of an elephant. When Brahma and the deities proceeded on their way, they found a goddess with a kamandalu in hand and offered them Amrit. After being refreshed, the sages asked whether she knew of Lord Shiva's whereabouts. She told them that Lord Shiva was presently living in the middle of Saanihitya Sarovar. After reaching the reservoir, they found Lord Shiva in the guise of an elephant. They requested him to help them, establish his Linga at the desired place. Lord Shiva agreed. All of them then went to the site of Lord Shiva's fallen Linga. He lifted it with his trunk and established it towards the west of Saanihitya Sarovar. The sages were satisfied and expressed their gratitude to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva, pleased by their eulogy and devotion, decided to make the Linga as his abode.

6.14 Greatness of Sthanu Tirtha

This chapter contains 4 sections:

6.14.1 The Greatness of Saanihitya Sarovar and Sthanu Tirtha

Sanat Kumar says- Describing the greatness of Saanihitya Sarovar, Lord Shiva told the sages that a devotee cannot attain salvation unless he pays a visit to this sacred place of pilgrimage. There is no other Tirtha like this one. "I would be easily accessible to a devotee who worships me with total devotion." After saying this, Lord Shiva disappeared.

In course of time, the heaven became crowded with human beings due to virtues attained by going on pilgrimages to Sthanu Tirtha. The deities became worried at this development and went to seek Lord Brahma's help. Indra said- "If things continue like this then the heaven will be dominated by mortals and we will have no option but to move out from there. Now, its your duty to protect us." Lord Brahma ordered Indra to fill up Saanihitya Sarovar with mud so that the Sthanu Linga gets concealed and devotees no longer visited that sacred place of pilgrimage.

Saanihitya Sarovar was filled up with mud as Indra created a dust storm, which lasted for several days. But still Indra's objective remained unfulfilled as Lord Shiva lifted Sthanu Linga and Tirtha Vata (Banyan tree) in his hands. There were

some sages present on the bank of Saanihitya Sarovar at the time of this incident. They smeared their bodies with that mud and due to this, all of them went to Brahma loka.

6.14.2 Other Prominent Lingas

Sanat Kumar says- "The sacred places of pilgrimage named Shukra Tirtha and Soma Tirtha are situated towards north and south of Sthanu Vata respectively. Daksha Tirtha is situated towards its south and Skand Tirtha towards its west. The sacrosanct Sthanu Tirtha is situated just in between all these four places of pilgrimage. Near Sthanu Tirtha is a Shiva Linga and Goddess Uma dwells there. There is a Maha Linga established by Takshak towards the north of Sthanu Vata while the Shiva Linga constructed by Vishwakarma is established towards the east.

By the side of that Banyan tree (Vata Tirtha) is situated- Bateshwar Linga, which was established by Lord Brahma. Some other prominent Lingas established in the vicinity of Sthanu Linga are- Gokarna Maha Linga established by Ravana, Kumareshwar, Hastipadeshwar Shiva, Siddheshwar Linga, Hibhavateshwar Linga etc.

6.14.3 King Ven, Birth of Prithu

Sage Markandeya then goes on to describe about the splendours of Sthanu Tirtha- Surya was Manu's father. Ven was Manu's grandson. He was wicked and always criticised the Vedas. Being displeased by his irreligious son, Ven's father left for the forest to do penance where he attained salvation.

In course of time, Ven's tyranny spread across the length and breadth of the earth. In a very short time, he became the lord of whole earth. He had strictly warned his subjects against worshipping any other deity except him. Sages became furious by his irreligious stricture and tried to change his mind but their efforts went in vain. Ultimately, Ven was killed by the angry sages. After his death, the sages churned his left hand, which resulted in the manifestation of a dwarf. The sages considered him to be unfit to become a ruler and churned Ven's right hand for the second time. This time, a divine entity manifested, who had all the auspicious signs on his body. The deities crowned this divine entity as the king and named him Prithu. Prithu proved to be a just king and his subjects were satisfied by his rule.

One day, sage Narad arrived at Prithu's court. Wanting to grab the opportunity, he asked Narad how his father could be liberated from his sins. Narad told him that his father was presently living among the Mlechchas and was suffering from diseases like consumption and leprosy. "He would be cured of his diseases if he is taken to Sthanu Tirtha and made to take a dip in the holy Saanihitya Sarovar", said Narad.

He went to the site and found his father living among the Mlechchas. After taking the Mlechchas' permission, he brought his father to Sthanu Tirtha. His

effort of helping his father to take a bath was resisted by the deity- Vaayu who said- "The waters of Saanihitya Sarovar would get polluted if such a lowly sinner took a bath in it. First of all, you must go on a pilgrimage and visit all the sacred places to make your father pure. Only then he will be entitled to take bath here".

Prithu accompanied by his father went on a pilgrimage and visited all the sacred places. When both of them returned to Sthanu Tirtha, his father had become pure by this time. Ven took his bath and became liberated from his sins. He worshipped Lord Sthanu and eulogised him with total devotion.

6.14.4 Ven Attains Heaven

Sanat Kumar says- "Lord Shiva became pleased by his devotion and blessed Ven that he would manifest from his body as Andhak in his next birth. Due to the sins acquired by criticising the Vedas, he would be born in the family of the notorious demon Hiranyaaksh." Lord Shiva then asked Ven to demand any boon.

Ven requested Lord Shiva to bless his attendant who had transformed into a dog due to his sin acquired by eating divine food. Lord Shiva blessed the attendant as a result of which, he regained his original form. Right then, Prithu arrived there. After seeing him, Ven expressed his gratitude for his tremendous effort without which, he would not have been liberated from his sins. After blessing Prithu, Ven departed for heaven.

In his father's absence, Prithu continued to rule justly. He performed many religious activities and gave unlimited donations to the Brahmins. After ruling for a long period, he went to Kurukshetra where he did a severe penance and attained the supreme abode after his death.

6.15 The Origin of Brahmeshwar's Four Heads

After creating all the movable and immovable living things, Lord Brahma created a beautiful lady. He was so infatuated by her beauty that he expressed his desire to procreate with her help. As a result of this grave sin committed by Lord Brahma, one of his four heads got detached and fell on the ground. He carried his severed head and went to Saanihitya Sarovar to atone for his sins. After reaching that site, he established a four-headed Shiva Linga and worshipped it daily. Pleased by his devotion, Lord Shiva appeared before him. He blessed Lord Brahma and said- "You have become free from the sin due to the virtue attained by establishing a four-headed Shiva Linga at this sacred place." After blessing him, Lord Shiva disappeared.

After getting liberated from his sin, Lord Brahma worshipped the idol of four-headed Mahadev and established another Shiva Linga in the middle of a nearby lake. He also created a reservoir, which is named after him- Brahmasar. He established two other Shiva Lingas- one towards the east of his hermitage and another at the bank of river Saraswati. A devotee who goes on a pilgrimage to

these sacred places created by Lord Brahma becomes liberated from all his sins and attains salvation.

6.16 Prithudak Tirtha

Describing the majesty of Prithudak Tirtha, Mahadev told the deities- "All of you must pay a visit to this sacrosanct place of pilgrimage situated near Saanihitya reservoir. The day on which Moon, Sun and Jupiter unitedly come under Mrigshira Nakshatra is called Akshay Tritiya. You must go to that sacred place and perform Shraadh of your ancestors."

All the deities led by Indra went to Kurukshetra where Prithudak was situated. Vrihaspati was also present with them. After taking their bath, the deities requested Vrihaspati (Jupiter) to enter into the Mrigshira Nakshatra as directed by Mahadev. Vrihaspati agreed to do that and entered into the Mrigshira Nakshatra along with the Sun and the Moon on Akshay Tritiya.

All the deities then worshipped their dead ancestors by offering Pind comprising of sesame seeds and honey. The ancestors were pleased and presented Mena to the deities. The deities in turn presented Mena to Himalaya. Himalaya was pleased to have Mena as his wife. In course of time, three daughters were born to them.

6.17 Birth of Uma and her Marriage to Shiva

This chapter contains 10 sections:

6.17.1 Mena gives birth to Uma

Mena gave birth to three daughters and a son. The eldest daughter- Raagini was red complexioned and had red eyes. Kutila was fair complexioned and had beautiful eyes like that of lotus petals. The youngest daughter- Kali was dark complexioned and had beautiful eyes like the petals of blue lotus. Mena also had a son named Sunaam.

When all three of them were of six years, they started to do penance. The deities saw these beautiful girls and were enchanted by their beauty. Aditya and the Vasu Ganas took Kutila to Brahma loka and asked Lord Brahma- "O lord! Will this girl give birth to a son capable of killing Mahishasura?"

Lord Brahma told them that she was incapable of bearing the effulgence of Lord Shiva and hence she should be released. Kutila was dejected by Lord Brahma's rejection and challenged him that she would try every means so as to attain the capability of holding the effulgence of Lord Shiva. Lord Brahma became angry with her arrogant utterances and cursed her to become a river. In a very short period, the furious current of Kutila over-flooded the whole Brahma loka but Lord Brahma managed to control her current. In this way, Kutila remained in Brahma loka in the form of a river.

When the deities saw Raagini doing penance, they took her to Lord Brahma. Even she was cursed by Lord Brahma in the same manner as her sister had been cursed. Due to Lord Brahma's curse, she became Sandhya (evening) and started for the auspicious yoga of Kritika.

After losing her two daughters, Mena tried to dissuade Kali from doing penance. But Kali was not to listen. Reacting to her mother's advises, Kali pronounced 'U' 'Ma' and as a result she was named Uma by her mother. Uma commenced her severe penance to please Lord Shiva. When Lord Brahma came to know about this, he instructed the deities to bring her along to Brahma loka but the deities were unsuccessful in their attempt as Uma's radiance was unbearable for them. They returned to Brahma loka and narrated the whole story to Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma was convinced that Uma was worthy of being Shiva's consort. One day, Himalaya, Uma's father brought her back home.

Once, Lord Shiva went to Himalaya Mountain to do penance. When Himalaya came to know of his arrival, he was extremely happy. He made all necessary arrangements for Lord Shiva. One day, while Lord Shiva was engrossed in meditation, Uma arrived there. Lord Shiva was pleased to know that Sati had re-incarnated as Uma. But his joy was momentary as he went back into deep meditation. Uma paid her obeisance by touching Shiva's feet. Lord Shiva wanting to test Uma's devotion went into hiding.

Uma sought her father's permission to do penance with the objective of having Shiva as her husband. Himalaya agreed and gave his permission. She started her penance after creating an earthen idol of Lord Shiva. She worshipped that idol with total devotion. Lord Shiva became pleased with her devotion and appeared before her in the guise of a mendicant. On being enquired by Uma, Lord Shiva told her that he was on his pilgrimage to Prithudak. "I am used to all these austerities as I have been practising it since my childhood. But why are you torturing yourself in such a tender age?", asked Lord Shiva.

Lomaprabha, Uma's companion was also present there. She told the mendicant about the objective with which Uma was doing her penance. "She wants to have Lord Shiva as her husband", said Lomaprabha. Hearing this, the mendicant laughed loudly and made fun of Shiva. He tried to dissuade Uma from marrying Lord Shiva. Uma became extremely angry and asked the mendicant to keep mum. But when the mendicant continued with his abuses, she got up and tried to move away from the side. Lord Shiva became pleased by her total devotion and appeared in his real form. He assured Uma to go back home and said- "I will send the sages to your house with a marriage proposal. The idol which you have been worshipping with such deep devotion would become famous as Bhadreshwar.

Uma returned home and Shiva proceeded on his way to Prithudak.

6.17.2 Lord Shiva sends Marriage Proposal

After paying a visit to Prithudak Tirtha, Lord Shiva returned to his abode. At that time, he was living at Mandaar Mountain. After Lord Shiva's contemplation, the Saptarishis arrived. After the formal salutations, Lord Shiva told the sages that his wife- Sati has re-incarnated as Uma. "All of you must go to Himalaya and request him to marry his daughter to me", said Lord Shiva. The Saptarishis abided by his instructions.

All of them went to Himalaya with Shiva's proposal. When Uma came to know about this, she was quite pleased but did not reveal her emotions. Himalaya was in a dilemma. He did not know whether to refuse or accept the marriage proposal. The Meru Mountain advised him to go ahead with the marriage as it would not be proper to refuse the Saptarishis.

Mena, Himalaya's wife said- "O lord of the mountain! The dead ancestors gave Uma to me on the condition that I would get her married with Shiva. The son born to her would kill the demons- Mahishasura and Tarakasura. At last Himalaya agreed. The Saptarishis were pleased and chose an auspicious moment for the marriage ceremony. They said- "Shiva would marry your daughter on Maitra Muhurta- the third day from today when the Moon will enter the Uttar Phalguni Nakshatra." After saying this, the Saptarishis returned to Mandaar Mountain and gave the good news to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva became pleased and worshipped the Saptarishis. The Saptarishis then went to inform all the deities about Shiva's marriage.

6.17.3 Uma Marries Lord Shiva

Lord Vishnu, Brahma, the deities and the Ganas were pleased to hear about Shiva's marriage. Lord Shiva went to his abode- Kailash Mountain to make preparations for the marriage ceremony.

Lord Shiva's marriage procession proceeded towards Himalaya Mountain. His appearance was quite terrifying with a tiger skin around his waist and Gorochan Tilak on his forehead. He had a garland of skulls around his neck. Snakes were coiling all around his body. His mount- Vrishabh (ox) was walking in a majestic way. The marriage procession comprised of the deities, Yakshas, demons and his Ganas. Lord Vishnu had Goddess Lakshmi by his side and was mounted on Garud (eagle) while Lord Brahma was mounted on Hans (swan).

When the marriage procession reached its destination, Himalaya received his esteemed guests with great honour and guided them to his palace. The womenfolk envied Uma as they glanced at the handsome appearance of Lord Shiva. Uma was looking divinely beautiful in her white coloured silken apparel. At last, both the bride and the bridegroom entered the canopy where the marriage ceremony was supposed to be performed.

Himalaya placing Uma's hand in Shiva's, requested him to accept her as his wife. Lord Shiva said- "O king of the mountains! Despite being homeless, I agree to accept your daughter as my wife." After that, both Shiva and Uma tied the nuptial knot and circumambulated the sacred fire for three times. Both of them made offerings to the sacred fire. As Uma touched Shiva's feet, Lord Brahma got a chance to have a glimpse of her beautiful face. He was so infatuated by her divine beauty that he ejaculated. Nobody except Lord Shiva was aware of this incident. Lord Brahma tried to conceal his ejaculated sperms (Veerya) under the soil. But Lord Shiva prohibited him from doing so and said- "Don't destroy this Virya. From it would manifest 80,000 Baalkhilyas."
Lord Shiva's prophesies came true and in a very short time, 80,000 Baalkhilyas appeared there. Lord Shiva then returned to Mandaar Parvat accompanied by his consort, Uma.

6.17.4 Vishwakarma Constructs a Palace

After reaching Mandaar Mountain, Lord Shiva instructed Vishwakarma to construct a home. Vishwakarma constructed a spacious home for Shiva, which was spread in the area of 64 Yojans. The home was decorated with Swastika symbols and its walls were made of gold.

One day, Lord Shiva jokingly referred to Uma as Kali because of her dark complexion. But Uma did not take his comments lightly and told Shiva that she was going to the Himalayas to do her penance so that he did not dare to call her by that name again. Thus, Uma went to Himalaya Mountain and commenced her penance. Standing on one feet, she engaged herself in severe penance. One day, a lion arrived and seeing Uma standing on one feet, waited patiently for the moment when she would lose her balance and fall into its clutches. Uma continued with her penance for one hundred years by continuously chanting the sacred Brahma mantra. Pleased by her devotion, Lord Brahma appeared before her and asked what she wished for. Uma first of all requested him to bless the lion with immense power. She then requested him to bless her with a golden complexion. Lord Brahma blessed her and disappeared. She abandoned her dark complexioned skin from which manifested Kaushiki. Now, her complexion turned golden due to Lord Brahma's blessings. Indra appeared before her and sought her permission to take Kaushiki along with him. Uma gave her consent without any hesitation.

Indra took Kaushiki to Vindhya Mountain and requested her to stay there. He said- "You would become famous as Vindhya Vaasini and would be revered even by the deities." He presented a lion to her and went back to his abode. On the other hand, Uma returned to Mandaar Mountain and lived happily. Lord Shiva became so deeply attached to her that he forgot about his duties and as a result of which, the whole world became disturbed. The deities became scared by this development and went to seek Lord Brahma's advice.

Lord Brahma went to Mandaar Mountain accompanied by all the deities. They tried to enter Shiva's abode but Nandi- Shiva's mount did not let them in.

Helpless, all of them waited eagerly for the time Shiva would come out. Agni seeing rows of swans coming out from Shiva's abode disguised himself as a swan and thus managed to get inside. He went near Lord Shiva and said- "O lord! The deities are anxiously waiting for you outside. How come, you are not aware of this?" Lord Shiva immediately got up and ran towards the deities.

Indra and other deities were scared at the prospect of losing heaven to Lord Shiva's progeny. So, they requested Lord Shiva not to procreate any child from Uma. Lord Shiva agreed but asked them as to who was capable of holding his out-flowing sperms. Agni came forward and swallowed each drop of Shiva's sperm. Satisfied, the deities left. Lord Shiva went inside and told everything to Uma. She became furious and cursed the deities that they too would remain sonless just like her.

One day before taking her bath, Uma applied Ubtan (mixture of sandalwood, turmeric etc.) on her body. She then peeled off the paste from her body and made an elephant-headed image from it. Maalini, her companion assisted her in taking bath. Maalini was smiling all the while as Uma was taking her bath. Uma became curious and wanted to know the reason of her strange smile. Maalini told Uma about her firm belief that one day, she (Uma) would definitely become a mother. Uma told her that this was impossible as the deities had prohibited her husband, Shiva from procreating a child. But Maalini continued to smile. After taking her bath, Uma went back home.

After sometime, Lord Shiva arrived and took his bath at the same place. The elephant-headed image created by Uma was lying there. Suddenly it became alive and started making a hissing sound from his trunk. Lord Shiva delightfully took him to Uma and said- "Look at your son." Uma was surprised to see that elephant-headed image alive and affectionately embraced him. Lord Shiva again said- "Your son will become famous as Vinayak and the whole world would worship him." Lord Shiva then entrusted the task of child's security to Ghatodar.

Thus, both Lord Shiva and Uma lived happily. The same Uma later on took incarnation as Goddess Katyayani and killed the demons- Shumbh and Nishumbh.

6.17.5 Killing of Nishumbh and Shumbh

Shumbh and Nishumbh were sons of Danu. They wanted to avenge Mahishasura's death and sent many demons like to bring Goddess Chandika after enslaving her. First of all, Sugreev was sent followed by Dhumralochan but both of them were killed by the Goddess. When Shumbh and Nishumbh heard of their death, they were infuriated. Nishumbh attacked the goddess with a huge army. Shumbh attacked from the other side. In the fierce battle, Goddess Chandika broke Nishumbh's sword as well as his shield. Nishumbh then attacked Goddess Chandika with his weapon- Shakti. Goddess Chandika broke

it with her Chakra. At last, she attacked him with her arrows at him and as a result, Nishumbh got injured and fell.

When Shumbh saw Nishumbh, injured and unconscious, he ran towards Goddess Chandika to kill her. Goddess Chandika blew her conch and made a thunderous noise by pulling the bowstring. Shumbh released the dangerous weapon- Ugradipti in the direction of Goddess Chandika. But her weapon Maholkanaamni destroyed it. Shumbh thundered loudly and attacked Goddess Chandika with a volley of arrows but none could cause any harm to her. Finally, Goddess Chandika attacked Shumbh with her trident. Shumbh fell down unconscious. After sometime, he regained his consciousness and attacked Goddess Chandika with his arrows. But she destroyed all the arrows. In the meantime, Nishumbh had regained his consciousness. He got up and attacked Goddess Chandika with his trident. In the end, Goddess Chandika killed Nishumbh by piercing her trident in his heart. As Nishumbh was dying, an another demon manifested from his body. Even he was killed by her. Her mount Simha devoured all the dead demons.

Shumbh became angry at the death of his brother- Nishumbh. He furiously told the goddess- "O wicked lady! Do not be proud of your strength borrowed from others." Goddess Chandika replied- "O wicked demon! I am the only power of this whole universe. I am the origin of cause and effect. Look! All the divinities are entering into my body.

The next moment, all the divine entities, which had earlier manifested from the bodies of the deities united with the goddess. Now, the goddess was alone. A tremendous battle was fought between Goddess Chandika and Shumbh. Ambika attacked him with numerous divine weapons. But, Shumbh neutralised her attack with his own weapons.

Shumbh covered the whole body of Goddess Chandika with his arrows. She broke his bow. After this, Shumbh attacked her with his weapon- Shakti, which was broken into pieces by her chakra. Now, Shumbh took out his sword and attacked her with it. She broke his shield and sword with her arrows. Shumbh then attacked her with his mace. Even his mace was broken into pieces.

Shumbh had no more weapons left with him. He hit the goddess on her breast with his clenched fist. She slapped him so hard on the face that he fell down. The next moment, he got up and manifested himself in the sky. Now, a tremendous duel was fought between them in the sky.

In the end, she dashed him to the ground and pierced the trident in his heart. Shumbh was instantly killed. After the killing of Shumbh, Gandharvas, the deities and Apsaras were so pleased that they danced and rejoiced. The whole atmosphere echoed with the sound- "SHANTI SHANTI" (Let there be peace).

After goddess Chandika killed Shumbh, all the deities under the leadership of Indra and Agni started eulogising her- "O Goddess! Be pleased upon us! Protect the whole world, as you are the goddess of this whole universe. You appear in the form of this earth- the base on which everything is situated. Your light illuminates all the living creatures. You are the only power through which creation, nurturing and annihilation takes place. You are the Brahmani, Maheshwari and the Kaumari. We salute you because you have protected us from the terror of the demons. We need your protection from all the calamities of this world."

Goddess Chandika was very pleased by their eulogy. She asked them for any wish. The deities said- "O Akhileshwari! We need your protection. Clear all the obstacles from our path. Eliminate our enemies."

Goddess Chandika replied- "During Vaivasvat Manavantar, I will take incarnation from Yashoda's womb- the wife of Nand, to kill the demons Shumbh and Nishumbh. After that, I will kill the demon- Vaiprachit in my most aggressive form. One hundred years later, I will manifest myself and would be known as Satakshi because of my hundred eyes. My next incarnation would be known as Shakambhari because I would nurture the whole world during the period of drought. I will kill the demon Durgam during that drought period. I will kill the demon Arun- the tormentor of all the three worlds by taking the form of a bee. Due to this, I will be known as Bhramari. I will take incarnations every time the demons torment the world.

Goddess Chandika says- "I will clear all the obstacles from the path of such a man who worships me. If a devotee listens to the great tales of how I killed Mahishasura, Shumbh and Nishumbh, on the eighth, ninth and fourteenth days of any month then he would be liberated from poverty and all his sins. He would become free from fear. A devotee must listen to my divine tales during all the religious ceremonies like making sacrifice, worship and performing Yagya. By doing this, all his enemies will be eliminated. A man who remembers me when faced with dangerous situations remains protected by me."

After blessing the deities, Goddess Chandika disappeared from their sight. All the demons, who had survived after the killings of Shumbh and Nishumbh, went to the nether world to save their lives.

6.17.6 Birth of Kaartikeya

Swallowing of Lord Shiva's sperm had subdued Agni's radiance. The deities advised him to take Lord Brahma's help. While he was on his way to Brahma loka, he came across a river named Kutila and requested her to hold Shiva's sperm. She agreed and requested him to release it in her waters.

In course of time, she became pregnant. The thought of giving birth to an illegitimate child tormented her, so she went to Lord Brahma to take his advice. Lord Brahma instructed her to abort her foetus at Udyachal Mountain, which

was covered by the dense forest of reed. Lord Brahma felt that it was a very safe place for her and nobody will be aware of this incident. Kutila followed his instructions.

Kutila aborted her foetus just according to Lord Brahma's instructions. The foetus remained there for 10,000 years after which a child was born, radiant like a rising Sun and eyes like the petals of lotus flower. The child being hungry started to cry. At that time, all the six Kritikas were passing through that forest. They were so mesmerised by the child's beauty that they started quarrelling among themselves as to who should first feed breast milk to the child. Seeing their quarrel, the child appeared with his six heads. This way, all the six Kritikas fed their breast milk to the child at a time. This is the reason why Kartikeya has six heads.

After Agni came to know of Kaartikeya's birth, he proceeded to bring him back home. But Kutila saw him on the way and enquired about his journey. When Agni revealed his intention, she started quarrelling with him for Kaartikeya's custody. Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu arrived there and enquired regarding their quarrelling. Lord Vishnu after being told the reason advised them to take Lord Shiva's help as he was the best judge on such matters.

Both Kutila and Agni went to Lord Shiva and tried to get his consent. Uma advised Lord Shiva by saying- "All of us must go to that place where the child is living and try to know as to whom he would like to have as his guardian." All of them went to that reed forest and found Kaartikeya in the lap of one of the Kritikas.

Kaartikeya knew about their desires. Seeing them worried, he manifested in four different appearances of Kumar, Vishaakh, Shaakh and Mahasen. Kumar went towards Lord Shiva while Vishaakh went towards Uma. Similarly, Shaakh went towards Kutila while Mahasen went towards Agni. Thus, everybody was satisfied. Lord Shiva then blessed the Kritikas by saying that Kaartikeya would become famous deriving his name from them.

All the deities arrived there and decided to make Kaartikeya, the chief commander of their army.

6.17.7 Kaartikeya Kills Taraka and Mahishasura

After being appointed as the chief commander of the deities, Kaartikeya sought his guardians' permission to kill the demons- Taraka and Mahishasura. All the deities including Lord Vishnu blessed Kaartikeya and wished for his victory. Lord Vishnu eulogised Kaartikeya and praised his valiance.

Kaartikeya then proceeded with a huge army comprising of Ganas and Kritikas. Kaartikeya had taken an aerial route so that he could reach his enemies' territory as soon as possible. The Ganas disguised as birds, followed him.

As they were about to reach their enemy's place, Kaartikeya requested the Ganas to descend to the earth. The Ganas followed his instruction and descended to the earth making a thunderous noise. Some demons like Mahish, Taraka, Virochan, Jambh and Kujambh heard this noise and went to Andhak to inform him about it.

As the demons were trying to find out the cause of the noise, a demon- Paatalketu arrived there in an injured condition. The demons were surprised and asked how he got injured. Paatalketu, narrating the incident said- "I had entered sage Gaalav's hermitage in the guise of a boar with the intention of killing him. Suddenly, an arrow pierced my body. I ran towards the sea coast to save my life where I found large number of people who were planning to kill Mahishasura and Taraka. I have come here to inform you about their plan. I am very scared and worried." Andhak assured them that there was nothing to worry about as both Mahishasura and Taraka were mighty and it was not an easy task for anybody to kill them.

When Mahishasura and Taraka came to know about this, they immediately set out with a huge army towards the sea coast. An intense battle commenced in which both the sides fought valiantly. The Ganas and the Matrikas launched a severe attack on the enemy with all the weapons they had at their disposal. But the demons remained unaffected and their assault was too much for the Ganas to bear.

After defeating the Ganas, Mahishasura menacingly ran towards Kaartikeya. Suchakraksh who was fighting from Kaartikeya's side unleashed his chakra to stop Mahishasura. Mahishasura retaliated by attacking the chakra with his mace but his mace was cut into pieces by the chakra. After destroying the mace, Suchakraksh's chakra chased Mahishasura. When Banasura saw Mahishasura's life in danger, he came forward to help him. He attacked the chakra with his 500 hands and grabbed Suchakraksh with the remaining 500. Seeing Suchakraksh in danger, Makaraksh hit Banasura on his head with his mace. Seething in pain, Banasura immediately released Suchakraksh.

Seeing his army defeated, Taraka came forward to fight with a sword. He fought valiantly and defeated the Ganas and the Matrikas in a very short time. The defeated Ganas took the refuge of Kaartikeya. When Kaartikeya saw Taraka chasing the Ganas, he killed him with his weapon- Shakti. Taraka's death scared Mahishasura and Banasura. To save his life, Mahishasura ran away towards Himalaya Mountain while Banasura hid himself in the ocean. Kaartikeya chased Mahishasura as a result of which, he was forced to abandon Himalaya. Mahishasura now took refuge in a cave of the Kraunch Mountain. Seeing the demon being protected by his maternal cousin- Guh (cave), Kaartikeya was in a dilemma. He knew that if he attacked Mahishasura inside the cave then his cousin- Guh might get hurt. He waited for Mahishasura to come out. Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Mahesh appeared and advised Kaartikeya to kill the demon. Indra too advised him the same. But Kaartikeya

did not pay heed and told them that he would kill Mahishasura only after he came out from the cave.

Furious, Indra told Kaartikeya that a man did not become a sinner if he killed one person to safeguard his community's interest. Giving his own instance, he narrated as to how he had killed his own brother- Namuchi. But Kaartikeya was not convinced and refused to act according to Indra's instruction. Very soon, their arguments turned into a major dispute when Indra boasted of his strength. Kaartikeya challenged him for a duel. Indra proposed a plan according to which, whoever circumambulated the Kraunch Mountain first would be considered as the winner.

When Kaartikeya returned after circumambulating Kraunch Mountain, he found Indra sitting there. Furiously, he asked Indra why he was seated. Indra replied that he was the winner as he had already finished circumambulating the Kraunch. Both of them quarrelled but were not able to decide the winner. So, both of them went to Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Brahma to take their help. Lord Vishnu advised them that only Kraunch Mountain could decide the winner. Both of them went to Kraunch Mountain and requested him to tell as to who the winner was. Kraunch Mountain said- "Indra is the winner since he was the first to circumambulate me. Kaartikeya became furious and attacked Kraunch Mountain with his Shakti as a result of which, the great mountain was fragmented into pieces. Mahishasura who was hiding in the cave of Kraunch Mountain was also crushed to death.

Later on, Kaartikeya felt very sorry for having killed his maternal cousin- Guh and after being advised by Lord Vishnu, he went to Prithudak Tirtha to atone for his sin.

6.17.8 Ritudhwaj Injures Paatalketu

King Ripujeet- a descendant of Raghu lived with his valiant and brave son named Ritudhwaj. Ritudhwaj being a virtuous prince thought it as his duty to protect all the sages and hermits. Under his protection, the sages performed their religious duties without any problem.

During Ripujeet's reign, a great sage- Gaalav lived in his hermitage doing penance. A demon named Paatalketu used to torment him. Although Gaalav was capable of burning Paatalketu to death yet he hesitated to do so for the fear of losing his virtuosity. One day, sage Gaalav was contemplating on the means to get rid of Paatalketu's terror tactics but was unable to find any solution and let out a deep sigh in frustration. He was amazed to see a horse falling from the sky. As he was looking towards the sky, he heard a heavenly voice- "This horse can travel thousands of Yojans in a single day. Give this horse to Ritudhwaj who will solve your problems."

As per the instructions of that heavenly voice, Gaalav presented that horse to Ritudhwaj and engaged himself in penance. This horse was sent by a

Gandharva king named Vishwavasu with a special purpose. Vishwavasu had a beautiful daughter named Madalasa. Infatuated by her beauty, the demon-Paatalketu had abducted her to Paatal loka. He wanted to marry her but Madalasa rejected his advances. Vishwavasu knew that only Ritudhwaj was capable of killing Paatalketu, so he presented that horse to sage Gaalav with the instruction that it should be given to Ritudhwaj.

Ritudhwaj went to Paatal loka on that horse and fought a fierce battle in which Paatalketu was seriously injured. Ritudhwaj released Madalasa from Paatalketu's captivity and married her.

6.17.9 Lord Shiva does Penance

Lord Shiva was so deeply attached to Uma that for 1000 years, he was possessed by only her thoughts. He forgot about his duties and as a result, there was anarchy all over the world. His obsession with Uma had also decreased his radiance. He decided to do penance with the objective of regaining his radiance.

When Uma came to know about his decision, she was unhappy but Lord Shiva consoled her by relating the significance of his decision. Before leaving, he entrusted the responsibility of her security to Nandi. He started wandering in search of a suitable place for doing penance. Sometimes, he did penance under the tree, sometimes on the mountain peaks and sometimes on the banks of a river. Initially, he used to eat only kand and Moola but later on he stopped eating even that and lived only on air. This way, 900 years passed during which he travelled to all the three lokas.

Ultimately, he even stopped breathing. He inserted a small wooden block in his mouth to stop the air from entering his body. This act of Shiva resulted in the tremendous generation of energy inside his body as a result of which that wooden block blasted off through his skull and fell on the Himalaya Mountain with such force that the wooden block levelled numerous peaks of Himalaya Mountain to the ground. The famous place of pilgrimage- Kedarnath is situated at this very place.

After that, Lord Shiva did a severe penance by immersing his whole body in the waters of Saraswati river. He remained immersed in the water for one complete year and did not come out. All the seven worlds including the oceans and the mountains started shaking violently. The stars and the Nakshatras started falling down on the earth. Curious to know why this happened, the worried deities went to Lord Brahma. Even Lord Brahma could not satisfy their curiosity as he had no answer. All of them then went to Lord Vishnu but he too was not aware of the reason.

All the deities including Lord Vishnu then went to Mandaar Parvat to see Lord Shiva. But they were surprised to find out that neither Lord Shiva nor Uma were present there. Lord Vishnu was aware of Lord Shiva's penance in the Saraswati

river. Due to the sin of causing Mridani's foetus to abort, the deities could not know the fact behind this strange event.

The deities then performed the most austere Taptakrichcha Vrata to atone for their sin. Lord Vishnu then gave them a glimpse of Shiva Linga, which manifested in his heart. All the deities again worshipped that Shiva Linga and made offerings. Lord Vishnu then took them to Kurukshetra where Lord Shiva was doing his penance in the waters of Saraswati. The deities eulogised Lord Shiva by saying "STHANAVE NAMAH" and Indra requested him to stop doing his penance as the whole world was in turbulence. Lord Shiva accepted their request with a smile and discontinued with his penance.

Even after Lord Shiva had stopped doing his penance, the earth continued to shake violently. Surprised, he started wandering here and there to know the truth behind this turbulence. He found sage Shukracharya doing penance on the bank of river Oghavati with the objective of learning the most secret Mritsanjeevani Vidya. Lord Shiva blessed him and his desire was fulfilled but the earth still continued to shake violently. Lord Shiva then proceeded towards Saptasaraswat where he found sage Mankanak was dancing in joy and his steps were causing the earth to shake. Sage Mankanak had acquired tremendous virtues due to his severe penance and as a result instead of blood, vegetative juice secreted from his wound. He had become arrogant and thought that it happened only because of his penance. Lord Shiva then subdued his arrogance by causing wound on his finger from which ashes poured out. Sage Mankanak was ashamed of himself and stopped dancing, and the earth became calm once again.

6.17.10 Lord Vishnu Kills Mura

Mura was the Aurasputra of sage Kashyap and Danu. When he saw the demons being vanquished by the deities, he went to do penance with the objective of getting boons from Lord Brahma. When Lord Brahma appeared before him, he said- "O lord! Bless me with a boon, which enables me to kill anybody merely by the touch of my hand." Lord Brahma blessed him and said- "So be it."

Getting this boon made Mura very arrogant. He challenged the deities, Yakshas and Kinnars to fight him but nobody accepted his challenge as they were scared of his power. He then entered Amravati- Indra's capital and challenged Indra for a duel. Indra became terrified and abandoned his abode- heaven. Now, Mura became the lord of heaven and very soon, he invited the other demons to join him in heaven.

Once, Mura challenged a king named Raghu who was proficient in rituals for a duel. At that time, Raghu was busy performing his Yagya. He admonished Mura by saying- "What is the great deal in fighting with the mortals? If you are really that brave then you should defeat Yamaraj." The arrogant Mura then went to Yama loka and challenged Yama. Yama was aware of Lord Brahma's boon

given to Mura. So, he went to take Lord Vishnu's help. Lord Vishnu advised him to send Mura to Vishnu loka by any means.

6.18 Description of Hells

Lord Brahma, on being enquired by Sanat Kumar on the different hells said- "Those who have illicit relationship or are in the company of sinners go to the first hell. Felling of trees and stealing the fruits of others' tree lead to the second hell. People who kill creatures unworthy of killing and those who quarrel over property dispute go to third hell. Terrorising the living creatures and deviating from one's own religion lead to the fourth hell. Behaving deceitfully with friends and taking false oath lead to the fifth hell. Keeping somebody in captivity and causing hurdles in the path of others would lead to the sixth hell. Stealing of royal property or copulating with the queen leads to the seventh hell. Greed and misuse of hard earned money lead to the eighth hell. Stealing of Brahmin's property and condemning others lead to the ninth hell. People who lack courtesy or who steal sacred texts go to the tenth hell." Altogether, Lord Brahma described about 16 hells.

6.19 King Danda and Araja

This chapter contains 4 sections:

6.19.1 Andhakasura – The Demon

Narad asks sage Pulastya- "What did the demon Andhak do after entering Paatal loka and how was Lord Shiva's life at Mandaar Mountain?" Pulastya says- "Andhak was infatuated by Girija's divine beauty and his lust only became stronger as the days passed by. Although Prahlad tried very hard to convince him and narrated the tale of his birth, which happened only because of Lord Shiva's blessing. Once Lord Shiva was engrossed in meditation when Uma playfully shut all his three eyes and the whole atmosphere was covered in darkness. An entity manifested from that darkness who was presented to Hiranyaaksh and who later on became famous as Andhak. Prahlad also told him that his lust for his own mother (Parvati) was licentious and most immoral."

In order to dissuade Andhak from going ahead with his immoral intention, Prahlad narrated a story, which described the destruction of an immoral king named Danda. "Sage Shukracharya was the royal priest of King Danda, who performed all the religious rites. He had a daughter named Araja. Once Shukracharya had gone to meet the demon Vrishparva and stayed there for some days. King Danda went to Shukracharya's hermitage to find out the reasons for his absence. He saw Araja and became enchanted by her beauty. He expressed his desires to Araja that he wanted her at any cost. Araja tried to dissuade him by saying that his immoral action would amount to committing treachery towards his Guru- Shukracharya. She also tried to scare him by citing about her father's rage, which even the deities feared. King Danda then narrated this tale to force her to accept his proposal-

"Vishwakarma had a beautiful daughter- Chitrangada. Once, she had gone to take bath in the river with her companions. Suddenly, King Surath arrived there and being infatuated by her beauty became lovesick. Seeing his pitiable condition, Chitrangada offered herself to him despite her companions' objection."

After narrating this story, King Danda asked Araja to follow the example of Chitrangada. But she said- "You have narrated only half the story. I will tell you what happened after that." She then told this story- "The immoral act of Chitrangada had angered her father and he cursed her that her married life would be unsuccessful. One day, King Surath was drowned by the powerful current of the Saraswati. Chitrangada fainted as she could not bear the sorrow of her husband's separation. After regaining her consciousness, she looked all around but could not find her husband. Once again, she became unconscious and fell in the Saraswati river. The powerful currents of Saraswati drowned her and she was ultimately thrown in Gomti river. Gomti's current abandoned her near a forest inhabited by ferocious lions."

After narrating her story, Araja told King Danda that she would certainly not accept his proposal as she did not want to meet the same fate as that of Chitrangada. The king told her that the story was still incomplete and narrated the following tale-

"When Chitrangada regained her consciousness, she found herself in a dense forest. Seeing her in a sorrowful mood, Anjan- a Guhyak consoled her by saying that very soon, she would re-unite with her husband. He also advised her to go on a pilgrimage to Shrikanth. Chitrangada went to Shrikanth situated towards the south of river Kalindi. After taking a bath in Kalindi river, she visited the Shrikanth temple and worshipped Lord Maheshwar.

Meanwhile, a sage arrived there and seeing Chitrangada queried about her staying in a deserted place. Chitrangada narrated the whole story as to how she was cursed by her own father. The sage became extremely furious after hearing her woeful tale and cursed Vishwakarma to become a monkey. He also advised her to go to Saptagodaavar and engage in the worship of Lord Haatkeshwar where one day she would meet Devavati- the daughter of demon Kandarmaali. Chitrangada went to Saptagodaavar and engaged herself in the worship of Lord Haatkeshwar. The sage wrote the following lines on the walls of Shrikanth temple- "Is there anybody who could liberate this beautiful girl from her sorrow?"

After that, the sage proceeded on his pilgrimage to Pushkarnath.

6.19.2 Vishvakarma becomes a Monkey

Continuing with his story, King Danda says- "Chitrangada stayed for a long period at Saptagodaavar. She used to spend time by engaging in the worship of Lord Haatkeshwar waiting for the day she would meet her husband.

Vishwakarma had become a monkey due to the curse of that sage and started living at Shaalveya Mountain.

One day, a demon named Kandarmaali arrived at the foothills of Shaalveya Mountain accompanied by his daughter- Vedavati. The monkey (Vishwakarma) held Vedavati by her hand. Kandarmaali became furious and took out his sword to kill the monkey. Sensing danger, the monkey ran away towards Himalaya Mountain carrying Vedavati in his lap. Kandarmaali chased him. On the way, the monkey abandoned Vedavati at the door of a secluded hermitage and hid himself in the waters of river Kalindi but was drowned. Kandarmaali had seen the monkey drowning and conjured that his daughter too might have drowned along with him. He returned to his abode in a remorseful mood.

The ferocious current of Kalindi river carried that monkey to a famous place called Shivi. After regaining his consciousness, he returned to the place where he had left Vedavati. After reaching that spot, he found Anjan accompanied by his daughter- Nandayanti treading along. He mistook Nandayanti for Vedavati and ran towards her. Sensing danger, Nandayanti jumped into the Hiranvati River and was carried by its ferocious current to Kaushal. When she regained her consciousness, Nandayanti found herself near a large Banyan tree. Sitting on the rock in a thoughtful mood, she heard a heavenly voice- 'Is there anybody who could inform sage Ritdhwaj about his son's captivity and who has been tied to this Banyan tree?' Nandayanti was surprised to find a 5 year old child being tied to the topmost branch of the Banyan tree. On being enquired, the child told her- "My name is Jabaali. Sage Ritdhwaj is my father who has blessed me with 5000 years of childhood birth, 10,000 years of adolescence and 20 years of adulthood respectively. But he had also warned me of being held captive for the period of 500 years during my childhood. One day, I had gone to take bath in the Hiranvati River when suddenly, I came across a huge monkey who enslaved me. I am living here in captivity since then."

After narrating his story, Jabaali enquired about Nandayanti's identity. Nandayanti told everything, which had happened to her. Jabaali advised her to go to Shrikanth temple situated on the bank of river Yamuna and said- "There, you would meet my father Ritdhwaj who comes to the temple daily in the afternoon to worship Lord Shiva. You can seek his help." Nandayanti went to Ritdhwaj's hermitage as per the instruction of Jabaali. One day while she was worshipping in the Shrikanth temple, she saw those lines inscribed by the sage, who had once cursed her father- Vishwakarma. She added one more line to that inscription- "Sage Mudgal had prophesised that I would become a queen. Instead of becoming a queen, I am going through my most turbulent period. Is there anyone who could help me out?"

After that, she went to the bank of river Yamuna where she found a beautiful hermitage. She entered inside the hermitage and found Vedavati sitting there. Very soon, both of them became fast friends. In the meantime, sage Ritdhwaj had gone to offer prayers in the Shrikanth temple and saw those lines inscribed

on its walls. He went into deep contemplation and understood what those lines meant. After worshipping, he left for Ayodhya where he met King Ikshvaaku. He requested Ikshvaaku to instruct his son- Shakuni to release Jabaali from the monkey's captivity. Ikshvaaku instructed his son to fulfil sage Ritdhwaj's desire. All three of them including Ikshvaaku went to the site of Jabaali's captivity. Shakuni being a master archer, cut all the creepers that had grown around Jabaali. Sage Ritdhwaj climbed up the tree and found that Jabaali was tied to the branch. He tried to open the knot but was unsuccessful and called Shakuni for help. Shakuni tried hard to open the knot but even he was unsuccessful. He then cut that branch into three pieces by unleashing a volley of arrows. Thus Jabaali became free albeit partially as he was burdened with the three pieces of that branch.

6.19.3 Search for Chitrangada and Vedavati

In the meantime, both daughters of Yaksha and the demon arrived at Shrikanth Mahadev temple and engaged themselves in the worship of lord Mahadev. One day, sage Gaalav arrived at the temple and was astonished to find two young ladies at such a deserted place. While taking bath, he heard the melodious songs of the two ladies. He became convinced of their divinity as it was impossible for mortals to sing with such expertise.

After the worship, sage Gaalav asked them their identity who then narrated the whole story. The next morning, as Gaalav was about to leave, both of them requested him to take them along. All three of them then left for Pushkar Tirtha. After reaching their destination, sage Gaalav decided to take a dip in the holy river. While taking bath, he saw many female fish trying to coax their male counterparts into making love by saying-"If sage Gaalav is not afraid of being in the company of young women then what makes you so scared in copulating with us?" The male fish replied that he was afraid of getting ridiculed by the public. Sage Gaalav was so ashamed of his conduct that he did not come out of the river.

Both ladies waited anxiously for sage Gaalav. Suddenly, Chitrangada arrived and was surprised to see strangers standing there. All three of them were looking at each other with surprised expressions on their face when Vedavati arrived there suddenly. She went near Chitrangada and enquired about her identity. Chitrangada narrated the whole story and revealed how circumstances had forced her to reach this place. In a very short time, all four of them became well acquainted with one another. They went to Haatkeshwar temple situated on the banks of Saptagodaavar River and worshipped Lord Haatkeshwar. They started living in the temple premises and spent their time in the daily worship of Lord Haatkeshwar.

On the other side, Shakuni, Jabaali and Ritdhwaj were anxiously searching them. During the search, Jabaali went to Shaakal Janpad accompanied by his father- Ritdhwaj. At that time, Shaakal Janpad was ruled by Indradyumna- the son of Manu. After meeting him, Ritdhwaj sought his help in finding his lost

daughter- Nandayanti. Indradyumna told him- "O Brahmin! Even I have lost my daughter and don't know where she is at present. So, all three of us must go in search of our respective daughters." After saying this, all three of them decided to proceed ahead in search of their daughter.

When they reached Badrikashrama, they were amazed to find a young man engaged in austere penance. After formal introduction, it dawned on Indradyumna that the young sage was his own nephew- Surath. Indradyumna requested his nephew to join him in searching his daughter. Ritdhwaj told Surath- "The girl for whom you are doing such austere penance had been taken by me to Saptagodaavar. Come with me and I will help you to re-unite with her." All of them then left for Saptagodaavar.

In the meantime, as Ghritaachi- Devavati's mother arrived at Udaygiri Mountain to where she came across a monkey and enquired if he had seen her daughter. The monkey told the frail looking Ghritaachi that he had taken a young woman named Devavati to a hermitage near Shrikanth temple. Ghritaachi revealed to the monkey that the girl whom he was referring as Devavati was actually her daughter Vedavati. She requested the monkey to help her in locating her lost daughter. Ghritaachi proceeded towards river Kaushiki in search of Vedavati followed by the monkey. After reaching there, Ghritaachi took a holy dip in the waters of Kaushiki.

In the meantime, Jabaali and Ritdhwaj too had reached the banks of river Kaushiki. When Jabaali saw that monkey, he told his father Ritdhwaj by pointing his finger towards that monkey- "This is the same monkey who had enslaved me and tied me up with creepers." Shakuni, the master archer became furious and sought Ritdhwaj's permission to kill that monkey. Ritdhwaj pacified him by saying- "Bondage is because of your past Karmas, so it is useless to kill this poor monkey."

He then requested the monkey to free his son- Jabaali from the weight of the three branches, which were still tied to his body. The monkey opened the knots and Jabaali was now absolutely free. Ritdhwaj was pleased and wanting to bless the monkey, said- "You can demand anything from me. I am willing to fulfil any of your wishes." The monkey replied by saying- "O great sage! Didn't you recognise this unfortunate monkey? I am Chitranagada's father whom you had cursed to become a monkey. Bless me that I become liberated from all my sins." Ritdhwaj blessed the monkey and said- "You would be liberated from all your sins, the day you procreate a child from Ghritaachi. You would also regain your human body on that day." The monkey became pleased after receiving the blessings.

In course of time, Ghritaachi became aware of the monkey's real identity and developed physical intimacy with it. At first, both of them stayed at Kolaahal Mountain but later on, they shifted to Vindhya Mountain.

Meanwhile the group of five people- Ritdhwaj, Jabaali, Shakuni, Indradyumna and Surath reached Saptagodaavar Tirtha. All of them got down from the chariot and took bath in the holy river. The thirsty horses quenched their thirst and satisfied their hunger by grazing on the green grass. After satisfying their hunger, the horses galloped towards Haatkeshwar temple. When Chitrangada, and her companions heard the galloping sound, they climbed on top of the temple and looked all around. Chitrangada saw Ritdhwaj and his companions taking bath and immediately recognised him. Her companion- Nandayanti too recognised Jabaali. They were extremely pleased and climbed down from the rooftop of the temple. They worshipped and eulogised Lord Haatkeshwar to express their gratitude.

After sometime, Ritdhwaj and his friends arrived at the temple to worship Lord Haatkeshwar. He recognised Chitrangada and was pleased to meet her. In the meantime, Ghritaachi and the monkey also arrived there. Ghritaachi was pleased to meet her daughter- Vedavati and embraced her. Ritdhwaj instructed the monkey to summon Guhyak from the Anjan Mountain, Kandarmaali from the Paatal loka and the Gandharva King Parjanya from heaven respectively.

Guhyak, Kandarmaali and Parjanya arrived at the Haatkeshwar temple and all three of them were pleased to meet their respective daughters. Chitrangada accusing herself for her father's turning into a monkey, tried to give up her life. But Ritdhwaj consoled her by saying that her father would regain his human body very soon. Ghritaachi too approved his statement and said- "After ten months, I would give birth to a son and on that same day, your father would be liberated from sage Gaalav's curse and regain his human body."

After ten months, Ghritaachi gave birth to a son who later on became famous as Nala. Vishwakarma became liberated from the curse and regained his human body. Chitrangada was delighted to meet her father. A grand marriage ceremony was organised at Saptagodaavar, which was witnessed by the deities, the Gandharvas and the demons. In this marriage ceremony, sage Gaalav performed the rituals after which, Jabaali was married to Kandamaali's daughter, Indradyumna to Vedavati, Shakuni to the Yaksha's daughter and Surath was married to Chitrangada. After the marriage ceremony, everybody returned to their respective places.

After completing this story, King Danda once again requested Araja to accept his proposal. But she was not convinced and said- "Say whatever you like but I will never surrender to your evil intentions."

6.19.4 Sage Shukracharya Curses Danda

Prahlad says- "Blinded by lust, Danda forcibly breached the modesty of unrelenting Araja and returned to his palace. Araja was saddened by the inability to protect her chastity and started wailing.

When Shukracharya returned to his hermitage, he found Araja lying down at the entrance. He asked her about what transpired with her. Araja narrated the whole story, which made Shukracharya extremely furious and his eyes were reddened due to his anger. He thundered- "The wicked Danda would become a pauper after losing his wealth and kingdom within a week." After cursing Danda, he instructed his daughter Araja to do penance so that she could become liberated from her sin and himself went to Paatal loka accompanied by his disciples. Shukracharya's curse came true and as a result, Danda lost his whole kingdom within a week.

After narrating this story, Prahlad told Andhak- "On account of the immoral deeds of King Danda, the deities abandoned Dandakaarnya and it was now inhabited by the demons. Now it must be clear to you that a person who breaches a chaste woman's modesty against her will is doomed to destruction. Andhak, you must not go ahead with your evil intention of marrying Parvati because she is Lord Shiva's consort whose might is unmatched."

Andhak replied angrily- "I have driven out the deities from heaven. Why should I get scared of Shiva who is fascinated by his wife's beauty?" Prahlad tried his best to convince Andhak against going ahead with his evil plan but it had no effect on him. Andhak ordered his lieutenant Shambar to go to Mandaar Mountain and inform Lord Shiva that Parvati should be given to him (Andhak) if he (Lord Shiva) wanted to remain alive. Shambar went to Mandaar Mountain with narrated Andhak's desire to Lord Shiva. Hearing this, Goddess Parvati who was sitting besides Lord Shiva told Shambar that she would agree to marry Andhak on the condition that he defeats Lord Shiva in a battle. Shambar returned and narrated everything to Andhak. Now, Andhak's anger crossed all limits and he ordered Duryodhan to prepare for the war. Andhak's huge army was instructed to assemble. The whole atmosphere reverberated with the sound of bugles and war cries. Andhak proceeded towards Mandaar Mountain with a huge army, which consisted of mighty warriors like Jambh, Kujambh, Shambar, Virochan, Duryodhan and Vrishparva. Destiny led Andhak towards his own death trap.

6.20 Lord Shiva Prepares for the Battle

This chapter contains 7 sections:

6.20.1 Ganas Throng Mandar Mountain

Pulastya says- "When Lord Shiva became aware of Andhak's imminent attack, he requested Nandi to summon all the Ganas who were more than 700 crores in number. Some of the prominent Ganas like Pashupat, Kaalmukh, Mahavrati, Digambar, Maini, Mahapashupat and Vrishabhdhwaj arrived at Mandaar Mountain to help Lord Shiva at the request of Nandi.

On seeing the valiant Gana- Pashupat, Lord Shiva embraced him, which surprised all the other Ganas. They were amazed at the special honour given to him. Lord Shiva realised their astonishment and said- "Although all of you have

great devotion towards me but in your ignorance, you have shown disrespect towards Lord Vishnu. All of you except Pashupat don't realise that both of us (Lord Shiva and Vishnu) are inseparable and there is no difference between us. Pashupat is aware of this and hence he has been accorded the highest honour." Having said this, Lord Shiva revealed his majestic form of Sadashiva to the Ganas. The Ganas were bewildered on seeing the whole universe existing within Sadashiva. Lord Sadashiva then transformed his appearance into that of Lord Vishnu. The Ganas also viewed the forms of deities like Indra, Surya and Lord Brahma etc. in him. They were now convinced that both Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu were the same. The dawning of this realisation liberated them from their ignorance. Lord Shiva blessed the Ganas and embraced them. All the Ganas then took their position all around Mandaar Mountain and readied themselves for the forthcoming attack.

6.20.2 The Battle Commences

Pulastya says- "When the Ganas saw Andhak's army approaching the Mandaar Mountain, they made a loud roar, which reverberated through the land and sky. Hearing this roar, Lord Ganesha became apprehensive and went to Mandaar Mountain to ask Lord Shiva about the origin of that tremendous roar. Lord Shiva told him- "I am going to fight a battle with Andhak." Lord Ganesha also expressed his willingness to accompany him. Lord Shiva then entrusted the job of Parvati's security to prominent Matrikas like Maalini, Jaya, Vijaya, Aparajita and Jayanti. He then went to fight Andhak holding his weapon- trident in his hand and mounted on a bull. The Ganas made a protective ring and surrounded him from all sides.

In a very short time, both armies confronted each other and a tremendous battle began in which the Ganas crushed many demons to death. The demons retaliated by attacking them with mace and swords. All the deities assembled in the sky to witness this battle. Mahapashupat attacked the demons with such force that it caused great losses to the enemy. On seeing death and destruction caused in the demon's camp, Tuhunda- the mighty demon attacked the Ganas with his most destructive weapon- Paridhi, which scared the Ganas and they fled. Then Lord Ganesha came forward to fight Tuhunda. Tuhunda assaulted him with his weapon- Paridhi but it fragmented into hundreds of pieces after dashing against Ganesha's belly. On seeing the destruction of his maternal uncle's most destructive weapon, Rahu came running towards Lord Ganesha and held him tightly. Lord Ganesha, Ghatodar and Sukeshi assaulted him simultaneously with their respective weapons. Writhing in pain, Rahu immediately released Ganesha. Seeing the time opportune, Lord Ganesha severed Tuhunda's head with his axe. After killing Tuhunda, Lord Ganesha attacked the demons but the attack was repulsed by the mighty Bali. In this battle, the Ganas were finally able to annihilate the demons. Shambar protected himself by taking Shukracharya's refuge and all the surviving demons including Andhak followed suit.

6.20.3 Shukracharya Uses Sanjeevani Vidya

Andhak went to Shukracharya and narrated the woeful tale of demons' defeat. He also requested Shukracharya to help the demons win the battle. Shukracharya was dejected but he assured the demons that he would make alive, all the dead demons with the help of Sanjeevani Vidya and really all the mighty demons like Jambh, Kujambh etc. became alive once again.

When Nandi came to know about this unbelievable incident, he went to Lord Shiva and informed him. Lord Shiva instructed him to bring Shukracharya by any means. "I shall control him by my Yogic power", said Lord Shiva. Nandi infiltrated into the demon's army but Hayakandhar spotted him and tried to resist his forward march. Nandi attacked Hayakandhar with his Vajra as a result of which, he fell down unconscious. After this, Kujambh, Jambh and some other demons ran menacingly towards Nandi. They surrounded him from all sides and started assaulting him ruthlessly. On seeing Nandi in danger, Lord Brahma became very worried and instructed the deities to help him.

Indra and all the other deities joined Lord Shiva's army and fought bravely against the demons. The sudden entry of the deities in the battlefield had distracted the attention of the demons and as a result, Nandi got an opportunity to penetrate through the rank and files of demons army. Ultimately, he successfully accomplished his mission and brought Shukracharya to Lord Shiva after abducting him. Lord Shiva wasted no time and swallowed Shukracharya immediately. The next moment, Shukracharya found himself in Lord Shiva's stomach. Shukracharya made frantic efforts to come out of the stomach but was unsuccessful. Being helpless, he started eulogising Lord Shiva. After becoming pleased by Shukracharya's extreme devotion, Lord Shiva expressed his desire to bless him with a boon. Shukracharya requested Lord Shiva to give him a way so that he can come out from his stomach. Lord Shiva agreed and asked him to come out immediately. Shukracharya started searching for an exit point but was amazed by the vastness of Shiva's stomach in which he saw the existence of the whole universe. He made ceaseless effort for one divine year but was unsuccessful in his attempts to come out from Shiva's stomach. At last, he surrendered to the will of Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva told Shukracharya- "By entering into my stomach, you have become my son. Now, if you want to become free then you should come out through the pore of my Linga." After saying this, Lord Shiva liberated Shukracharya through his Linga who after being released made salutations to him and joined the demons' army once again. The demons were extremely pleased at his arrival. Once again, a fierce battle took place, which continued for eight divine years. When the demons realised about the deities' supremacy in the battle, they started employing illusionary tactics and swallowed all the Ganas and the deities. The scene of the battlefield, Mandaar Mountain became devoid of Ganas and the deities, which made Lord Shiva extremely furious. His extreme anger resulted into the manifestation of Jrimbhayika- a ferocious entity. The

mere touch of Jrimbhayika made the demons to yawn. All the deities and the Ganas came out from the opened mouths of the demons. Once again, the battle commenced, which continued for 700 years.

When Andhak realised that Lord Shiva was invincible then he decided to acquire Parvati by deceitful means. He sought the help of one of his most trusted commander- Sunda by saying- "O brave Sunda! You are like my brother. I need your help. The battle has continued for such a long period but has still remained indecisive. I have decided to approach Parvati in the guise of her husband- Shiva and I want you to disguise yourself as Nandi." Sunda agreed to disguise himself in the form of Nandi to help his master.

Andhak went to Mandaar Mountain in the guise of Lord Shiva mounted on Sunda's back who had disguised himself as Nandi. When Parvati saw the injury marks on Shiva's (Andhak's) body, she told her companions- "Look, how grievously the demons have injured my husband! Please bring the medicinal herbs quickly so that I can dress his wounds." Her companions rushed to bring the medicinal herbs and in the meantime, Parvati started observing the wounds of Shiva (Andhak) minutely. She was surprised to see the absence of both the shoulders on his body. She immediately realised that somebody else had come in the guise of her husband- Shiva. Sensing danger, she ran away to protect herself. Her companions ran behind her and Andhak chased all of them. Parvati and her companions hid behind bushes. Being unable to locate Parvati, Andhak returned to the battlefield and the battle continued.

The deities were fighting valiantly. Lord Vishnu created havoc among the enemy ranks and Lord Brahma sprinkled holy water from his kamandalu, which had increased the strength and power of the deities. Indra attacked the demon- Bala on his head with his Vajra but it was broken into pieces. On seeing the destruction of his weapon, Indra became scared and wanted to flee from the battlefield. Jambh, the demon made fun of him and challenged him for a duel. Indra then requested Lord Vishnu to provide him with a weapon so that he could fight Jambh but Lord Vishnu sent him to Agni. Agni made a replica of his weapon- Shakti and gave it to Indra. Holding his new weapon, Indra then proceeded on his way to fight Jambh mounted on his elephant- Airavat. Jambh assaulted Airavat with such force that Indra started falling down towards the ground.

When the Siddhas and Charanas saw Indra falling down, they provided a magnificent chariot to him so that he could fight with the demons. Meanwhile Indra dashed against the ground with a great thud as a result of which, the earth shook violently.

Sage Shamik's wife thought that the earth was shaking violently due to the impact of earthquake. She requested her husband to carry their son outside the hermitage so that he remains unharmed and said- "The astrologers say that whatever is kept outside home during an earthquake becomes stable." Sage

Shamik was very surprised but still followed her instructions. After the shaking of the earth had subsided, Shamik's wife requested him to bring back the child. Sage Shamik went outside and was surprised to find two children instead of one. He came back carrying both the children in his lap and asked his wife as to what made the second child to manifest. She told him that the second child will become the charioteer of Indra and assist him in the battle. This second child was none other than Maatali who acted as the charioteer of Indra during the battle.

Now, Indra had both the chariot and the charioteer in his possession. He went to the battlefield mounted on his new chariot. On the way, he saw a multicoloured bow and arrows lying on the ground. He picked up the weapons and fought valiantly with the demons. He killed many mighty demon warriors. Jambh and Kujambh ran menacingly towards him but Lord Vishnu severed the head of Kujambh with his Sudarshan chakra. Jambh assaulted Indra with his mace but Indra retaliated by attacking with his Shakti as a result of which Jambh was killed. The rest of the demons fled from the battlefield.

6.20.4 Lord Shiva Kills Andhak

Inspite of death and destruction caused to his army, Andhak still wanted to continue fighting against Lord Shiva's army. He even dismissed the advises of Shukracharya who wanted a momentary retreat and rebuffed him by saying- "All the deities including Maheshwar and Indra cannot save themselves from my wrath. Very soon, I am going to vanquish them." He then instructed his charioteer to move the chariot towards enemy's position. He shot a volley of arrows, which entirely covered the deities. Lord Vishnu advised the deities to kill Andhak along with his charioteer and destroy the chariot so that Lord Shiva could kill Andhak without any difficulty.

All the deities then attacked the demons with renewed vigour. Lord Vishnu killed thousands of enemy's horses with his mace. Skand killed the charioteer and Vinayak accompanied by the Ganas destroyed Andhak's chariot. After being bereft of his chariot, Andhak attacked the deities with his mace. Seeing the deities in danger, Lord Shiva concealed them within his body and challenged Andhak for a duel. Andhak tried to attack Lord Shiva who was mounted on Nandi. Lord Shiva immediately jumped down from Nandi's back and attacked Andhak with his trident, which pierced his chest. Even after being seriously injured, Andhak did not die instead he pulled Lord Shiva for one mile holding him tightly in his clutch. Lord Shiva tried to resist by attacking for the second time. But Andhak retaliated by hitting Shiva with his mace causing serious injury on his head. A stream of blood oozed out from the wound, which poured down towards all the four directions. The blood stream which poured down towards east resulted into the manifestation of Bhairav named Kaalraj. Similarly, Kamaraj, Chakramala, Somaraj, Swachcharaj, Lalitraj and Vighnaraj manifested from the other three directions.

Lord Shiva then lifted Andhak above his head with the help of his trident, which was still pierced in Andhak's chest. His body had become red due to the blood oozing out from Andhak's wound. Lord Shiva had toiled hard to kill Andhak and as a result, he was perspiring profusely. The sweat drops originating from Shiva's forehead resulted into the manifestation of a divine girl while the sweat drops that fell on the ground from Shiva's face resulted into the manifestation of a divine boy. Both the children started gulping down the blood emanating from Andhak's wound. Lord Shiva named the girl child as Charchika while the boy child was named Mangal and blessed both of them. Lord Shiva held Andhak above his head for 1000 divine years, which reduced his body to a skeleton.

At last, Andhak realised his mistake and begged for forgiveness. He eulogised Lord Shiva and hailed his greatness. Lord Shiva told him that he would forgive him only when he accepts Parvati as his mother. Andhak agreed not only to accept Parvati as his mother but also Shiva as his father. Shiva became pleased and lowered down his trident. He healed Andhak's wound by his divine touch. The deities became pleased at Andhak's change of heart and blessed him. Lord Shiva then took Andhak to Mandaar Mountain.

Parvati was still hiding behind the bushes. When she saw Lord Shiva approaching, she recognised him and called her companions to come out from their hiding. Lord Shiva gleefully told Parvati that Andhak had now become her slave. "Look at him. He is making salutations to you. Accept him as your son. Andhak then eulogised Parvati with complete devotion. Parvati became pleased and expressed her desire to bless him with a boon. Andhak said- "I don't want anything. I just want to become liberated from all my sins and remain in the proximity of Lord Shiva." Parvati blessed him and made him the Gana of Shiva who became famous as Bhringi.

6.20.5 The Origin of Marut Ganas

Narad asked Pulastya about the battle which Indra fought with the demon at Malay Mountain. Pulastya replied- "Andhak's followers- Maya and Taar tried to enter Pataal loka after being defeated by the deities. While they were passing close to the Malay Mountain, they decided to live there being enchanted by its natural beauty. The caves of Malay Mountain were inhabited by sages who were Lord Shiva's devotees. The demons started causing obstacles in the rituals performed by the sages. When Lord Shiva came to know about this, he instructed Indra to go to Malay Mountain and help the sages. Indra went to Malay Mountain and successfully drove out the demons from there.

Narad again asked Pulastya as to why Indra was also known as Gotrabhit. Pulastya narrated the following tale- "After her son's death, Diti requested her husband, Kashyap to bless her with another son so that Indra could be killed. Sage Kashyap advised her that she would get her desire fulfilled after the successful accomplishment of her penance lasting for 100 divine years. In course of time, Diti became pregnant. One day, sage Kashyap left for Udaygiri Mountain to do his penance and Diti was left all alone.

One day, Indra arrived at the hermitage and expressed his desire to be at Diti's service if she permitted. Diti gave permission and Indra engaged himself in serving her. He used to keep the oblation site clean and bring dry wood necessary for the performance of Yagya. This continued for 1000 divine years. One day, Diti was taking rest after her bath. She had postponed her penance for sometime because of her impurity. As she was tired, very soon, she fell asleep. Seeing the moment opportune, Indra entered into her womb through her nostrils and cut the foetus into seven parts. After waking up, Diti realised about her foetus' destruction. Indra was very scared on the prospect of being cursed by Diti and said- "I am not the cause of your foetus' destruction. It has been destroyed due to your own impurity. So please don't curse me." Diti replied- "You are certainly not responsible for my foetus' destruction. It was all in my destiny. From the pieces of the foetus manifested the Marut Ganas and since Indra had tried to harm his own uterine brothers therefore he became famous as Gotrabhit.

6.20.6 Marut Ganas of Different Manvataras

Sage Pulastya says- "O Narad! Now, I am going to describe about the origin of Marut Ganas of various Manvantaras. Savan was Swayambhu Manu's son. He had no sons and when he died, the sorrowful queen- Sudeva heard a heavenly voice, which instructed her to give up her life by jumping into the burning pyre." "You would become a proud mother of seven sons", said the heavenly voice. The queen acted accordingly and died after jumping into the burning pyre."

"The souls of the dead king and queen ascended towards the sky. The prophesies made by the heavenly voice came true and Sudeva found herself in her periods. The king enjoyed a physical relationship with the queen for five days. Incidentally, few drops of sperms fell towards earth. After this both the souls departed towards Brahma loka. These falling drops of sperms were gathered by the wives of some sages and stored in a lotus flower. Those women were Samana, Nalini, Vayushmati, Chitra, Vishakha, Harita and Alini. They mistook the sperms for ambrosia and drank it after getting permission from their husbands. But after drinking it, they became devoid of their effulgence and were abandoned by their respective husbands. In course of time, they gave birth to seven sons who became famous as Aadya Maruts during Swayambhu Manvantara."

After having described about the Marut Ganas, sage Pulastya went on to describe about Swarochish Manvantara- "Kratudhwaj was the son of Swarochish Manu. He had seven sons. All of them went to Meru Mountain to do penance as they were desirous of Indra's kingdom. Indra being scared instructed Putna to create hurdles in their penance so that Kratudhwaj's sons wishes remained unfulfilled."

"Putna went to the place where Kratudhwaj's sons were doing penance. There was a river nearby where Kratudhwaj's sons arrived one day to bathe. Acting

according to her plan, Putna too entered into the river to take bath. Kratudhwaj's sons were infatuated by her divine beauty. They could not control themselves and as a result, they had an ejaculation. Putna was successful in accomplishing her mission of corrupting the thoughts of Kratudhwaj's sons, who after realising that their penance had gone in vain returned to their father's kingdom. The released sperms of Kratudhwaj's sons was swallowed by a fish named Shankhini. One day, she was caught by a fisherman and presented to Kratudhwaj's sons, who again released her into a nearby pond. In course of time, Shankhini died after giving birth to seven young fish. The seven young fish started crying at their mother's death. Lord Brahma appeared and advised them not to cry and for this reason, they were called Marut. Lord Brahma blessed them by saying- "All of you would attain the status of deities and would be capable of flying in the air." After finishing his story, sage Pulastya told Narad that this was how Marut Ganas originated during Swarochish Manvantara.

Sage Pulastya says- "Now, I am going to describe about the Marut Ganas of Uttam Manvantara. Jyotishmaan was the son of Vayushmaan and his wife was the daughter of sage Vrihaspati. As they were sonless, both of them decided to do penance to beget a son. The Saptarishis arrived there and enquired as to why they were doing such a severe penance. Jyotishmaan's wife told the Saptarishis that they were desirous of a son. The Saptarishis blessed her by saying that she would become a mother of seven sons. In course of time, Jyotishmaan's wife became pregnant. One fateful day, Jyotishmaan passed away. His sorrowful wife wanted to commit Sati. While he was sitting on the burning pyre, suddenly, a piece of burning flesh fell into the nearby river and got fragmented into seven pieces. Seven Marut Ganas manifested from these seven pieces of flesh."

Sage Pulastya says- "During Taamas Manvantara, Ritdhwaj, the son of Taamas Manu did a severe penance with the desire of getting a son. He made offerings of his own flesh, blood and sperms to the oblation fire. Suddenly, he heard a heavenly voice instructing him not to make offerings of his sperms. But the king continued with his offering and as a result, he died. After sometime, seven infants manifested from the oblation fire who later on became famous as the Marut Ganas of Taamas Manvantara."

King Ripujeet was the descendant of Raivat. He was sonless and after being pleased by his extreme devotion, the deity- Sun had blessed him with a daughter named Surati. In course of time, she grew into a beautiful woman. One day, Ripujeet passed away and a grieved Surati decided to give up her life. The Saptarishis arrived there and they were so infatuated by her beauty that they tried to prevent her from doing so. But unrelenting Surati did not listen and gave up her life by jumping into the burning pyre. The sorrowful Saptarishis went away after casting lusty glances on her. Seven infants manifested from the burning pyre, who became famous as Marut Ganas of Raivat Manvantara.

During Chaakshush Manvantara, a sage named Manki did a tremendous penance at the banks of Saptasaraswat. But he fell down from grace after being

infatuated by the beauty of an Apsara named Vapu. His sperms ejaculated and fell into the Saptasaraswat river from which manifested the seven Marut Ganas.

6.20.7 Lord Vishnu Kills Kaalnemi

After hearing the news of Bali's coronation, Maya and some other demons went and advised Bali to avenge the killings of his father- Virochan and other relatives by Indra. Bali became furious and marched with a huge army to fight the deities.

When Indra heard this news, he started making preparations for the battle and very soon, the deities' army assembled at the foothills of Udyachal Mountain. A fierce battle was fought between both the armies. The movement of the troops covered the whole sky with dust which subsided only after the tremendous bloodbath wetted the earth with blood. Kartikeya fought valiantly in this battle and killed many demons. The demons too retaliated by vigorously attacking the deities. Lord Vishnu created havoc in the demons' army by killing many demons in a very short time.

When Kaalnemi- the demon saw that his comrades were scared of fighting Lord Vishnu, he attacked the deities with renewed vigour and swallowed many of the Yakshas, Kinnars and the deities. The deities became scared and started running away from the battlefield. The demons became delighted considering it as their victory and the defeat of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu became furious and covered the Udyachal Mountain with a volley of arrows named Naarach. Bali and Maya became terrified and instigated Kaalnemi to fight against Lord Vishnu.

Kaalnemi confronted Lord Vishnu with a mace but it was destroyed by Vishnu's chakra. After destroying Kaalnemi's weapon, Lord Vishnu first severed both his hands and then his head. The news of Kaalnemi's death spread like a wildfire in the demons army and they fled from the battlefield.

6.21King Bali

This chapter contains 2 sections:

6.21.1 Bali Rules Heaven

The mighty Banasura saw the demons running away from the battlefield and came to their rescue. The arrival of Banasura boosted the morale of the defeated demons and they returned to fight the deities. Lord Vishnu advised the deities to fight gallantly and disappeared from the battlefield. Shukracharya assured the demons of their victory because he thought that the deities would be no match for the demons might in the absence of Lord Vishnu.

Once again, a fierce battle commenced. Bali attacked the deities ferociously with his mace. Banasura devastated the deities' army with his thousand hands. Ultimately, the deities were defeated in this battle and the heaven came under

the control of demons. The defeated deities took refuge in Brahma loka after abandoning the heaven. Bali ruled the heaven with the help of his relatives.

One day, Bali called his father- Prahlad to heaven and requested him to become the ruler of heaven but Prahlad refused by saying- "As I have chosen the path of Yoga after relinquishing everything, it would not be proper for me to get attached to worldly matters once again. Since you have snatched heaven from the deities on account of your valiance, hence the heaven belongs to you." Bali requested Prahlad to enlighten him on the duties of a king and on the virtuous deeds which would enable him in attaining Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha.

Prahlad advised Bali to rule in a just manner and for the benediction of the world. He also advised Bali to engage himself in the service of all the three castes so that they remain loyal to him. Prahlad said- "Virtuosity increases when people unwaveringly follow their Dharma. Increase in virtuosity helps a king to rule without any problem."

Bali agreed to rule in a just manner as per the advice of Prahlad.

6.21.2 The Splendors of Bali

Pulastya says- "The just rule of Bali had transformed the Kaliyuga into Satayuga. Even his subjects engaged themselves in virtuous activities like penance and Yagyas. They practised non-violence and always spoke the truth. One day, Goddess Trailokya Lakshmi went to Bali and said- "I have come to bless you because you are a victorious king. You have even defeated Indra and have control over all the three worlds." After saying this, Goddess Lakshmi entered into the body of Bali.

During the reign of Bali, his subjects were happy and prosperous. Nobody experienced the pangs of hunger and everybody's desire was fulfilled. The prominence of virtuosity and religiousness during Bali's rule was incomparable and prosperity prevailed throughout his kingdom.

6.22 Mythological Tales

This chapter contains 7 sections:

6.22.1 Dhundhu Performs Ashvamedhya Yagya

Pulastya says- "During his pilgrimage, Prahlad visited many sacred places like Manas Tirtha, Kaushiki, Devahnad and Hastinapur etc. At last he reached the bank of river Yamuna where he worshipped Lord Trivikram (Vaaman)." Narad was surprised at the mention of Vaaman's name and asked Pulastya- "Lord Vishnu is still to take Vaaman incarnation then how come Prahlad visited his temple? Pulastya says-"Sage Kashyap had an Aurasputra named Dhundhu. Lord Brahma had blessed Dhundhu of immortality. In course of time, Dhundhu defeated the deities and drove them out from heaven as a result of which, they had to take refuge in Brahma loka.

When Dhundhu came to know that the deities were living in Brahma loka, he decided to attack Brahma loka. He consulted the demons but they told him that it was impossible for them to reach Brahma loka. Sage Shukracharya said- "Indra had accomplished 100 Ashwamedha Yagyas by the virtue of which, he could go to Brahma loka. If you are desirous of reaching Brahma loka then you too will have to perform Ashwamedha Yagya." Dhundhu expressed his willingness to perform Ashwamedha Yagya.

Shukracharya started making preparations for Ashwamedha Yagya at the bank of river Devika. He appointed his disciples and some other sages belonging to Bhargava's clan to supervise the Yagya ceremony. The Ashwamedha Yagya commenced and a horse was let loose according to the tradition.

When the deities came to know about this Ashwamedha Yagya being performed by Dhundhu, they were scared and requested Lord Vishnu to disrupt the Yagya so that Dhundhu could not reach Brahma loka. Lord Vishnu assured the deities and went to the site where Dhundhu was performing Ashwamedha Yagya in a dwarf appearance. He entered into the Devika River and started drowning according to his plan.

When the demons saw the dwarf (Lord Vishnu) drowning, they rushed to save him. After taking him out from the river, they asked him about his identity. The dwarf said- "I am the youngest son of Prabhas. My name is Gatibhaas and my elder brother is Netrabhaas. After our father's death, my elder brother did not give me my due share in the property. When I insisted, he flung me into this river."

The Brahmins who were performing the Yagya requested Dhundhu to donate wealth to Gatibhaas. Dhundhu agreed and said- "I am willing to fulfil all your wishes. Demand anything you like. Gatibhaas demanded a small piece of land measured by three steps. Lord Vishnu then revealed his giant appearance and covered the whole earth with his first step. His second step covered the heaven and there was no place left for his third step. Lord Vishnu became furious and put his third step on the back of Dhundhu as a result of which he was crushed to death. A large pit measuring 1000 Yojans was created due to the impact of his weight and Lord Vishnu threw Dhundhu's dead body in that pit."

After completing his story, Pulastya told Narad- "This is how Lord Vishnu became Trivikram for the first time to defeat the evil designs of Dhundhu. Prahlad paid a visit to the temple of Vaaman situated at the place where Dhundhu was killed.

6.22.2 Pururava Regains his Good Looks

Pulastya says- "After worshipping Lord Trivikram, Prahlad went to Lingabhedak Mountain and worshipped Lord Shankar. He also visited many more sacred places like Kedar Tirtha, Badrikashrama, Bhadrakarna and Vipaasha. At last, he reached Irawati and worshipped that Almighty Lord with whose blessings,

Pururava was able to regain his good looks." Narad was curious to know this story.

Pulastya says- "Once upon a time, there lived a rich trader named Sudharma. Once, while passing through the Surashtra desert, he was attacked by bandits and robbed of all his possessions. Dejected, he started wandering in the desert like a lunatic. He saw a Shami tree and decided to take rest under its shade. On this tree lived numerous ghosts. On seeing Sudharma, the leader of the ghosts asked him as to where he was going. Sudharma narrated his woeful tale which made the ghosts very sad. The leader of the ghosts said- You must not lose heart. If you are destined to possess wealth then you would become wealthy once again but worrying about your lost wealth will only have ill effects on your health and you would become weak. On being instructed by their leader, the ghosts offered food to the hungry Sudharma. After satiating his hunger, Sudharma asked the leader of the ghosts- Who are you? How could you provide me such a delicious dish in this deserted forest? The leader of the ghosts said- "In my previous birth, I was a Brahmin and my name was Somasharma. I was very poor but my neighbour Somashrava was a rich and prosperous trader. Being a poor Brahmin, I was not able to perform my religious duties. Once, people of all castes thronged Irawati and Nadvala to take a holy dip on the auspicious occasion of Shravan Dwadashi. I followed them and after taking my bath, performed all the necessary rituals. As I was poor, I could donate things of little importance like umbrella, shoes, sweets, curds etc. This was the first and the last time, I had donated anything in my life. After my death, I became a ghost. My companions also never donated anything in their previous life. The delicious food which you had relished just now was due to the virtue of food items donated in my previous life. This Shami tree is due to the virtue of donating umbrella."

Somasharma was surprised and asked the leader of the ghosts whether he could be of any help to him to which the leader requested him to offer Pind Daan at Gaya so that he became liberated from Preta Yoni. Somasharma went to Gaya and performed the necessary rituals of Pind Daan as a result of which, the ghosts went to Brahma loka after being liberated.

Somasharma continued to observe the fast of Shravan Dwadashi every year. One fateful day, he passed away and was reborn in a royal family. After reaching youth age, he became the king of Shaakal Puri and indulged in enjoyments and sensual pleasures. After his death, he was born in a Brahmin family. Though ugly, he was well versed in all the scriptures. After a few years, he got married. His wife would make fun of his ugly looks which annoyed him. He went to Irawati and worshipped Lord Jagannath with full devotion. Lord Jagannath blessed him and his ugly looks turned into a handsome appearance. He enjoyed a very satisfied married life and after his death was reborn as King Pururava.

6.22.3 The Description of Nakshatra Purusha

Sage Narad asks Pulastya about the austerity named Nakshatra Purusha which King Pururava had accomplished to please Lord Vishnu. Pulastya says- "All the constellations dwell in different parts of Lord Vishnu's body. The Mula Nakshatra dwells in his feet, Rohini Nakshatra in his thighs, Ashwini in his knees, Purvashadha and Uttarashadha in his chest etc. A devotee who worships Lord Vishnu- the possessor of all the constellations methodically and according to the rituals attains liberation. Worshipping Lord Vishnu's different organs helps in attaining good health and a disease free life. Being pleased by this austerity, Lord Vishnu bestows radiance and sweet voice to the devotee. Arundhati had achieved great acclamation due to the successful accomplishment of this austerity. Aditya with a desire of a son had his wish fulfilled in the form of Revant, his famous son. The Apsaras- Rambha and Menaka had acquired unparalleled beauty and sweet voice respectively after successful accomplishment of this austerity. Similarly, Chandra had attained supreme radiance and Pururava regained his kingdom. This way, whoever performed this austerity, his desire was fulfilled.

6.22.4 Prahlad's Pilgrimage

Pulastya says- "Prahlad went to the sacred place called Rishikanya and took a holy dip in the Irawati River. After that, he worshipped Lord Janardan in the temple situated nearby and then proceeded on his journey towards Kurukshetra. After reaching there, he worshipped Lord Kurudhwaj and paid a visit Lord Narsimha temple. After taking a holy dip in the river Devika, he proceeded on towards Gokarna Tirtha where he took bath in river Prachi and worshipped Lord Vishwakarma. Ultimately after visiting numerous sacred places, he reached Madhunandini where he worshipped Lord Shiva who had a chakra in his hands and Lord Vishnu possessing a trident."

Narad was surprised and asked Pulastya why Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu had held Sudarshan chakra and trident respectively. Pulastya explained- "During ancient times, there was a mighty demon king named Jalodbhav. He had pleased Lord Brahma by his severe penance and was blessed by him to become immortal. After receiving the boon, Jalodbhav became arrogant and started tormenting the deities and the sages. The deities sought the refuge of Lord Vishnu. They accompanied Lord Vishnu to Himalaya Mountain to meet Lord Shiva. Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva exchanged their weapons. Both of them went to kill the demon who on seeing them got scared and hid in a nearby river. Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva waited eagerly for him on the opposite banks of the river."

"After sometime, Jalodbhav came out of the river thinking that both of them must have departed by now. He climbed up the Himalaya Mountain and both the deities chased him. Lord Shiva attacked him with his chakra while Lord Vishnu pierced his trident in his chest. Jalodbhav died and fell down from the Himalaya Mountain." After finishing his story, Pulastya says- "This was the

reason why both Lord Vishnu and Lord Shankar had exchanged their weapons. The spot where Lord Shankar had kept his foot resulted into the manifestation of river Vitastaa. Prahlad after worshipping Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva at Madhunandini went to Bhrigutung Tirtha situated on the Himalaya Mountain."

6.22.5 Tales of Upamanyu and Shridama

Sage Narad was still not satisfied by Pulastya's explanation and asked Pulastya as to what compelled Lord Vishnu to give his chakra to Lord Shiva. Pulastya says- "There used to live a learned Brahmin named Veetmanyu. He was well versed in all the Vedas and other scriptures. His wife's name was Atreyi and Upamanyu was his son. Inspite of his knowledge, Veetmanyu lived in absolute poverty and found it difficult to make arrangements for daily necessities. One day, young Upamanyu on being hungry started crying. His helpless mother consoled him by saying that if he worshipped Lord Shiva then he would even get nectar and would get liberated from the pangs of hunger for ever. Veetmanyu was surprised and asked as to who this Lord Virupaaksh was. Atreyi narrated the following story- During ancient times, there was a demon king named Shridama. He ruled over the whole earth. Once, he decided to snatch the Srivatsa- Lord Vishnu's dearest ornament from him. When Lord Vishnu came to know about his intention, he became furious but since he had no weapon at his disposal he went to take Lord Shiva's help in this regard. Lord Shiva gave Sudarshan chakra to him and said that with the help of that infallible weapon, he could kill anybody. But Lord Vishnu was not convinced about the weapon's destructive power and expressed his desire to test it on Lord Shiva himself. Lord Shiva agreed and Vishnu released the Sudarshan chakra towards him. As a result, Lord Shiva's body was severed into three parts- Vishvesh, Yagyesh and Yagyayajak. Now, Lord Vishnu became satisfied and made salutations to Lord Shiva to express his gratitude."

"Lord Vishnu went to the mountain where the demon Shridama lived and severed his head with the Sudarshan chakra. After killing the demon, Lord Vishnu returned to his abode- Ksheersagar." After finishing her story, Atreyi told Upamanyu that such was the greatness of Lord Virupaaksh. Upamanyu did a severe penance to please Lord Virupaaksh and was blessed by him as a result of which, he never felt hungry in his life.

6.22.6 Gajendra and the Crocodile

Sage Narad requests Pulastya to describe how Gajendra managed to release itself from the jaws of the crocodile. Pulastya says- "There lived a crocodile in a reservoir near Trikut Mountain. One day, a thirsty elephant arrived there to quench its thirst. The wicked crocodile caught hold of the elephant's leg and dragged it towards the middle of the reservoir. The elephant tried its best to release itself from the crocodile's jaws but was unsuccessful. Being helpless, it started remembering Lord Shri Hari as it was his great devotee. It picked up a lotus flower and chanted the following stotra- 'Salutations to that Lord Vishnu who is the originator of this universe. Salutations to the omnipresent Lord Vishnu who is revered by the sages. I take the refuge of Lord Vishnu who is also

known by the names of Vishveshvar, Shri Hari and Sanatan Purush.' This way, the elephant eulogised Lord Vishnu with great devotion.

Pleased by his devotion, Lord Vishnu killed the wicked crocodile with his Sudarshan chakra and liberated the elephant. Actually, this crocodile was none other than Gandharva Huhu who had attained the form of a crocodile after being cursed by sage Deval. He was liberated from the curse and went to heaven. Lord Vishnu touched the elephant and it got transformed into a divine human being. This way, with the blessings of Lord Vishnu, both of them were liberated.

6.22.7 The Greatness of Sarasvat Stotra

Sage Pulastya says- "There lived a Kshatriya who kept enemity towards Brahmins. After his death, he was reborn as a demon and spent his life indulging in nefarious activities. Once he saw a hermit doing penance. He wanted to devour him but was unsuccessful in his attempt as the hermit had protected himself by chanting Vishnupanjar stotra. So, he waited for the hermit for four months to come out from his meditative trance. After the completion of his meditation, the hermit was surprised to see a weak and frail demon waiting for him. He asked the demon about his identity and the purpose for which he was waiting there. The demon told him that although he had come with the intention of devouring him, he was unsuccessful in his attempt as he (hermit) was well protected by Vishnupanjar stotra. "I am very impressed by your spiritual feats and I am desirous of learning the same from you. I have committed many sins in my life, so tell me how to become liberated from them", asked the demon. But the hermit was not convinced and told the demon that he would never preach a demon. He advised the demon to take help of some other Brahmin. The demon went in search of another Brahmin. One day, he saw a Brahmin doing penance and caught hold of him. The Brahmin was frightened and requested the demon- "Wait until I return after giving this fruit to my teacher." But the demon thought that the Brahmin was trying to escape hence he did not allow the Brahmin to leave. The worried Brahmin went near a burning fire and pleaded for help. Suddenly, Goddess Saraswati manifested herself and told the Brahmins- "Don't be afraid. With my blessings, you would be able to narrate the means for the demon's benediction." After blessing the Brahmin, Goddess Saraswati disappeared.

The Brahmin narrated the Saraswat stotra to the demon- You must chant the following stotra thrice in a day- 'I make salutations to Lord Hari who is also known as Krishna, Hrishikesh, Vasudev, Janardan and Jagannath. May he liberate me from my sins. I make salutations to Lord Vishnu who rests on Sheshnaag and who hails Shankchakra Gada and chakra in his hands, may he liberate me from my sins. Lord Vishnu who manifests himself in each individual soul just like the element of fire manifests itself in a piece of wood. May he liberate me from my sins.'

The Brahmin told the demon that the daily chanting of Saraswat Vishnu stotra would enable him to get liberated from his sins. The demon was pleased and after releasing the Brahmin went to a place called Shaalgraam. He engaged himself in severe penance and started chanting the stotra taught by the Brahmin. Ultimately, he was successful in becoming liberated from his sins and went to Vishnu loka.

6.23 Bali Performs Ashvamedhya Yagya

This chapter contains 6 sections:

6.23.1 Bali's Arrival at Kurukshetra

Pulastya says- "After the departure of Prahlad on his pilgrimage, Bali desirous of performing a Yagya went to Kurukshetra. Shukracharya had invited the descendants of sage Bhargava to supervise the proceedings of Ashwamedha Yagya but his decision was not approved by the descendants of some other sages like Atri, Gautam, Kaushik and Angira. As a result, all of them left Kurukshetra.

After their departure, Shukracharya started making preparations for the Yagya and initiated both Bali and his wife- Vindhyavali into the rituals. After that, a horse was let loose according to the tradition. The demon Tarkaaksh followed that horse. The Ashwamedha Yagya continued for three months after which, Aditi gave birth to a child who was dwarfish in size at a time when the Sun had juts entered the zodiac of Gemini. All the deities and sages including Lord Brahma were extremely pleased by Lord Vaaman's birth. They went to Aditi's hermitage and eulogised Lord Vaaman. Lord Vaaman became pleased by their eulogy and requested Lord Brahma to help perform his consecrations. On being instructed by Lord Brahma, sage Bharadwaj performed Vaaman's Jaat karma and Yagyopavit. After that, sage Bharadwaj taught him Vedas and other scriptures which was mastered by Vaaman in less than one month. After finishing his studies, Lord Vaaman sought his Guru's permission to go to Kurukshetra. Sage Bharadwaj expressed his inability by saying- "How can a mortal like me give permission to the supreme lord? If you want to go to Kurukshetra then how can I stop you from going there? I have some queries regarding your various abodes and would you be gracious enough to enlighten me on that?"

Lord Vaaman said- "The whole universe including the sky, earth, ocean, mountains, clouds are pervaded by my existence. All the deities, sages, living and non-living things have manifested from me. When I took my first incarnation of Matsya I had my abode in the holy waters of Manas Sarovar. As my second incarnation of tortoise, I had my abode in the holy waters of Kaushiki River. I had my abode at Hastinapur when I took my incarnation as Govind. As Narayan, I had my abode at Badrikashrama, as Jayesh, I had my abode at Bhadrakarna." This way, Lord Vaaman described about his different abodes in great detail.

6.23.2 Arrival of Lord Vaaman at Kurukshetra

Pulastya says- "After satisfying Bharadwaj's curiosity about his different abodes, Lord Vaaman left for Kurukshetra where Bali was busy performing his Yagya. As soon as Lord Vaaman reached Kurukshetra, the whole earth started shaking violently and high tides rose in the ocean. Being frightened of Lord Vishnu, Agni did not accept the offerings made by Bali. Bali was very surprised by all these sudden developments. He asked Shukracharya about the reason for all these strange happenings."

Shukracharya replied- "O king of the demons! Definitely, all these strange happenings signifies the arrival of Lord Vasudev." Bali then asked Shukracharya as to what was the most appropriate way of honouring his eminent guest. "What donations should I make to him so that he is pleased and satisfied?", asked Bali. Shukracharya warned him by saying- "Forget about donating anything otherwise you will get into serious trouble." Bali told him that he would not disgrace himself by refusing to meet the demands made by Vasudev. "The way a man behaves in his speech, action and thoughts is the result of his past karmas. Are you not aware of the incident related with Koshkar which happened at Malay Mountain? Koshkar was the son of sage Mudgal. He was famous for his austerities and his wife too was very virtuous. In course of time, a son was born to them but alas he was blind and deaf. Koshkar's wife abandoned that child in front of her house. Incidentally, an ogress named Surpaakshi happened to arrive there and after seeing the abandoned child, exchanged him with her own child. She carried Koshkar's child to Shaalodar Mountain with the intention of devouring him. When her husband came to know about the incident, he reprimanded Surpaakshi for her misdeed. The demon warned the ogress that both of them would be cursed by the Brahmin and advised her to keep the child at the same place from where she had brought him."

In the meantime, Koshkar came out from his hermitage after hearing the cries of Surpaakshi's child. He was surprised to find some other child instead of his own and told his wife- "It seems that this child is under the influence of a ghost." After saying this, he protected the child by demarcating a round circle initiated with mantra around him. Right then, the ogress arrived and after keeping the Brahmin's child on the ground wanted to take back her own child. But she could not enter inside that circle. Koshkar took his child in his lap and went inside the hermitage. This way, the ogress returned to the mountain without her child.

Koshkar brought up both the children with great care. He named the ogress's child as Diwakar while his own son was named Nisachar. As destiny would have liked it, Diwakar turned out to be a very studious child and became well versed in Vedas within a very short time whereas Nisachar was not interested in studies and had a bad habit of criticising everybody. Koshkar became furious and threw Nisachar in a well. There was a Amla tree inside that well and the child survived living on its fruits. This way, ten years passed and one day,

Koshkar's wife arrived at the well to fetch water. On seeing his mother, Nisachar tried to convince her that he was her son but she was not convinced. He then accompanied his mother back home and narrated the reason why he had taken birth as a deaf and blind child. "In my previous birth, I was the son of Vrishakapi and was very famous for my scholarly traits. In due course of time, I became very arrogant and started indulging in all sorts of evil deeds. After my death, I went to Raurav Narak and suffered all the tortures over there. I was reborn as a tiger and after being enslaved by a king, I was kept inside a cage. Once, the king had gone out and the beautiful queen arrived near the cage. I was infatuated by her beauty and expressed my lusty desires to her. She was taken aback by my proposal and said- "How can physical relationship be possible between us?" But I requested her to release me by opening the cage door. The queen opened the door and I became free. I caught hold of her and tried to satiate my lust but right then the guards arrived there and killed me. Once again I went to the hell and after suffering the pains I was reborn as an ass. My master was Agniveshya, a Brahmin. Once, his wife- Sumati wanted to go to her father's house. Agniveshya advised her to go riding on my back and instructed his servant to escort us. While on our journey, we reached a river and Sumati expressed her desire to take bath. She went to take bath and I waited for her to return. While she was taking her bath, I became infatuated by her beauty and caught hold of her. The servant who was escorting us saw this and became angry. He killed me by hitting with his stick. Once again, I went to hell and was reborn as a parrot. A wicked fowler trapped and sold me to a trader's son. Although I lived a luxurious life, yet I was not happy because of my slavery. Once, his daughter arrived near my cage and playfully kept me on her breasts. I became infatuated and tried to have physical relations with her. But I was suffocated to death after getting entangled in her necklace. Once again, I went to hell and after suffering the tortures, was reborn as a bull. My master was a Chandaal and I used to pull his cart. Once, his wife was sitting in the cart I was pulling. Unmindful of her surroundings, she was singing songs in a beautiful voice. After listening to her melodious voice, I became infatuated and tried to have physical relations with her. I turned back but the noose around my neck became tight and I was suffocated to death. Once again I went to hell and after suffering the pains, was reborn as a blind and deaf son to you. I remember all my previous lives and I am aware that my physical disabilities are only because of my past sins. I have decided to atone for all my sins by doing penance and indulging in virtuous deeds. After saying this, he went to Badrikashrama to do penance.

After finishing his story, Bali told Shukracharya that a man inherits his qualities from his past life and it is impossible for him to change them. "It is applicable to both good and bad qualities. My penance, virtuosity, benevolence and generosity have been inherited from my past life and come what may, I have decided not to shun them."

Pulastya says- "This way, Bali remained firm in his resolve to meet any demand made by his esteemed guest and started waiting eagerly for his arrival."

6.23.3 Lord Vaaman's Demands

Bali was pleased that he would get an opportunity to see the Almighty God whom the sages contemplate upon. He was proud of his good fortune that the lord was paying him a visit. Shukracharya aware of the reason for Vaaman's arrival warned Bali against making any promise to him. Bali replied- "How can I refuse if the Almighty God demands anything from me? I am willing to face any hardship to safeguard my benevolent image. I don't mind if the deities get benefited by my actions. Even if the lord is coming with the intention of killing me, I am not scared as that is how I would attain salvation. Come what may, I am not going to abandon my charitable nature."

As the conversation between Shukracharya and Bali continued, suddenly, Lord Vaaman arrived at the site. Vaaman's radiance subdued the power of all demons present there. Lord Vaaman being impressed by the grandeur of Vaaman's Yagya complimented him for organising such a magnificent Yagya. Bali eulogised and worshipped his esteemed guest. He requested Vaaman to reveal the reason of his arrival and promised that his wishes would be fulfilled. Lord Vaaman smiled and told him that he needed a small piece of land measured by three steps for the performance of Yagya. Bali was surprised by this demand and requested him to ask for more land but Lord Vaaman told him that he needed only that much land.

Bali agreed and took a vow to donate a piece of land measured by three steps. Hardly had Bali taken his vow, when suddenly Lord Vaaman expanded his size. His first step covered the whole earth. By his two successive steps, he covered the two worlds. This way, Bali was forced to donate all the three worlds according to his vow. Lord Vishnu then made Indra, the king of all the three worlds and sent Bali to the nether world named Sutal. He blessed Bali by saying- "You would enjoy a long life till the end of this present Kalpa. You would hold the post of Indra till the arrival of Saavarni Manavantar. As long as you remain supportive of the Brahmins and the deities, you would enjoy all the pleasures of life. But if you go against their wishes then you would be fastened by Varun's noose." After saying this, Lord Vishnu disappeared.

6.23.4 Lord Brahma Worships Lord Vaaman

Narad asked sage Pulastya as to where did Lord Vaaman go after disappearing from the oblation site. Pulastya replied- "Lord Vaaman went to Brahma loka mounted on his Garud. On seeing him, Lord Brahma gave a warm reception and after worshipping him asked about the reason for his sudden arrival. Lord Vaaman told him that he had sent Bali to Sutal loka for the welfare of the deities and so that they could get their share of the Yagya. Lord Brahma expressed his desire to see the giant form of Vishnu which he had taken while measuring all the three worlds. Lord Vishnu obliged him and showed his giant appearance. Lord Brahma was impressed and eulogised him. He requested Lord Vishnu to remain in Brahma loka in his appearance of Vaaman. Lord Vishnu had agreed to do this and remained there.

6.23.5 Bali Lives in Paatal Loka

Pulastya says- After reaching the nether world, Bali got constructed a beautiful city made of diamonds and other precious stones. Vishwakarma had constructed an enormous sized altar in the central part of the city. The windows of Bali's palace were well decorated with pearls. Bali lived there in luxury and by enjoying all the pleasures of life.

One day, while the demons were engaged in their sensual pleasures, suddenly the fearsome Sudarshan chakra entered Bali's palace and after making the demons bereft of their radiance went back to Lord Vishnu. Bali was very worried and thought that only his grandfather Prahlad could help him out from this situation. On being remembered by Bali, Prahlad appeared before him. Bali requested him to describe the means which would be benedictory to him. Prahlad was pleasantly surprised by his change of heart and said- "At last, you have realised your mistake. Listen Bali! A man who takes refuge in Lord Vishnu and surrenders himself to his will becomes liberated from all the miseries and sorrows of life. A man who has accepted Lord Vishnu as his master need not fear from anything not even death. All the things which are visible in this universe are the various manifestations of Lord Vishnu himself. A devotee of Lord Vishnu does not have to go to hell and he becomes liberated from the cycles of birth and death." This way, Prahlad described about the greatness of Lord Vishnu and his worship in great detail.

6.23.6 Bali’s Queries to Prahlad

Bali enquired about the virtues which a man attains by the worship of Lord Vishnu. He also asked Prahlad about the worship and its rituals by which Lord Vishnu is pleased. Prahlad says- "Sages believe that the donations which are made with total devotion and in the name of Lord Vishnu exist forever. Lord Vishnu is extremely pleased if Malati, Shataavari, Champa, Juhi and Naagar flowers are offered to him. He is also pleased when the offerings of Bilva patra, Shami patra, Tamaal and Amaali patra are made to him. He is pleased when sesame seeds are donated during the Hindu month of Maagh. A person who gets a Vishnu temple constructed liberates his ancestors from their sins. Bali, you must get the Vishnu temple constructed and worship with complete devotion. You must try to please Lord Vishnu by making donations of cow, jewels, gold and land. If you engage yourself in such virtuous activities then you will certainly attain benediction." After saying this, Prahlad disappeared.

After Prahlad's departure, Bali followed his instructions faithfully and engaged himself in the worship of Lord Vishnu. He instructed Vishwakarma to construct a magnificent temple of Lord Vishnu and started worshipping Lord Vishnu accompanied by his wife. He used to clean the temple premises and offer the articles which were dear to Lord Vishnu. This way, Bali and his wife Vindhyavali engaged themselves in the worship of Lord Vishnu with complete devotion.

6.24 Benefits of Studying Vamana Purana

Study of Vaaman Puraan helps a man to enhance his knowledge and makes him free from all kinds of worldly attachments. It also increases his love and devotion towards the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. There are ten characteristics evident in all the Puraans- 1) Sarg. 2) Visarg. 3) Sthaan. 4) Poshan. 5) Uti. 6) Vritti. 7) Raksha. 8) Manvantara. 9) Vansh. 10) Upaashraya.

Sarg deals with the descriptions of the origin of this universe. Visarg enlightens us as to how a living thing transforms itself from one species to another. Sthaan, Poshan, Uti and Vritti deal with the descriptions of various means which are employed by a man for his survival. Raksha describes about the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu which he takes for the protection of the humankind. Manvantara deals with the complete description of the history of the whole Manvantara period. Vansh describe about the lineage of all the kings including Lord Brahma. Upaashraya enlightens us on the real meaning of Brahma.

Pulastya says- "A man who listens to the divine tales of Vaaman Puraan attains to Vishnu loka after becoming free from all his sins. He attains the same virtues which a performer of Ashwamedha Yagya does. Even listening to one part of Vaaman Puraan bestows great virtues and equivalent to making pilgrimage of numerous sacred places. Narad, Vaaman Puraan is the 14th among all the 18 Puraans which describes about the majesty of Lord Vishnu."

Five names of Lord Vishnu has been mentioned in Vaaman Puraan- Kaaran Vaaman, Narayan, Amitvikram, Shaargang chakra and Purushottam. A devotee who chants any of these sacred names of Lord Vishnu and makes salutation either by speech, thought or deed attains to Vishnu loka.

6.25 Vaaman Incarnation

This chapter contains 2 sections:

6.25.1 Indra does Penance to Atone for his Sins

Pulastya says after being defeated by the demons Indra went to Brahma loka and narrated his woeful tale to him. Sage Kashyap- his father was also present there. Lord Brahma told Indra that he was reaping the fruits of his evil deeds. Sage Kashyap told him that his miseries were due to the sin acquired by the destruction of Diti's foetus. Indra asked both of them, how his sins could be atoned. Lord Brahma advised him to take Shri Hari's help.

Indra then went to the north of Kalinjar Mountain and started living in a hermitage situated on the bank of river Mahanadi. He did penance for one year. Pleased by his devotion, Lord Vishnu appeared and blessed him saying- "Your austere penance has liberated you from the sin of destroying Diti's foetus and very soon, you will regain your kingdom." After receiving the blessing, Indra went to Aditi's hermitage and narrated the tale of his defeat at the hands of demons. Aditi knew that Indra would not have been defeated had Lord Vishnu been on

his side during the battle. So, she went to Lord Vishnu and worshipped him with devotion. Lord Vishnu assured her that very soon, he would incarnate as her son and destroy the demons. Having said this, a part of Lord Vishnu's effulgence entered into Aditi's womb.

6.25.2 Bali Abuses Lord Vishnu

After Lord Vishnu had established himself inside Aditi's womb, the demons became devoid of their radiance. Bali was surprised by this sudden development and asked Prahlad about it. Prahlad went into deep meditation and saw Lord Vishnu manifesting in Aditi's womb. After coming out from his meditative trance, he told Bali that the demons had lost their radiance due to Shri Hari who is about to take incarnation at the request of the deities.

The arrogant Bali made fun of Shri Hari by saying- "Who is this Shri Hari? We have many mighty warriors in our ranks who are more powerful than Vasudev." Prahlad was a devotee of Shri Hari and he did not like the arrogant utterances of Bali. He cursed him by saying that very soon he would meet his downfall and lose his kingdom. After being cursed, Bali realised his mistake and begged for forgiveness. Prahlad too had calmed down by that time and said- "Even though Lord Vishnu is omnipresent, I cursed you being under the influence of my ignorance. My words will certainly become true but don't lose heart. Go and take refuge in Shri Hari- the supreme protector. He will liberate you from all your sorrows." After saying this, Prahlad went on his pilgrimage.

6.26The Deities Resting Days

Lord Vishnu takes rest on Sheshnaag during the whole period of Uttaraayan, which begins just after the last day of the bright lunar phase in the Hindu month of Ashaadh is over. After he goes to sleep, all the deities, Gandharva, Devamaata etc. follow suit.

Narad requested Sage Pulastya to shed light on the days when the deities take rest. Sage Pulastya replied- "A devotee should consider the eleventh day of the Hindu month of Ashaadh Shukla Paksha, when the Sun enters the zodiac of Gemini as the day when Lord Vishnu goes to rest. A devotee should make a replica of Sheshnaag and after worshipping the idol of Lord Vishnu, lay him down to rest on the twelfth day. Kamadev is said to take rest on the thirteenth day on his bed made of Kadamb flowers. The Yakshaganas take rest on the fourteenth day of the Hindu month of Ashaadh Shukla Paksha. Their beds are made of yellow lotus. Lord Shiva is believed to take rest on Purnima. His bed is made of tiger skin.

7 Markandeya Purana

This Purana consists of 16 chapters:

7.1 Introduction

Once Jaimini, a disciple of sage Vedavyasa expressed his curiosity before Markandeya- 'O Lord! In the great epic Mahabharat, which was created by Vedavyasa, description of Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha appears to be intertwined at times and at other times, it appears to be separate from one another. Vedavyasa had described the norms, the stages and the means to perform the duties in all the four stages. This epic contains cryptic knowledge of Vedas. Hence O great sage! I have approached you in order to grasp the full knowledge contained in Mahabharat with your help. Why did Lord take human incarnation even though He is the cause of the origin, perpetuation and destruction of the universe? How did Draupadi become the wife of five Pandavas? How did Balaram expiate for the sin of killing a Brahmin? How did Draupadi's sons give up their lives? Kindly narrate all these things in detail. '

Markandeya says- 'O Muni ! Presently I am engaged in evening worship. Hence I do not have time to narrate these things in detail. But I am telling you about the birds which will narrate you the entire content of Mahabharat. Those birds will also remove all your doubts. Sons of the great bird Drona- Pingaksha, Vibodha, Suputra, Sumuk etc. stay in the caves among the hills of Vindhyachal. They are proficient in Vedas. Go and ask them, they will remove all your doubts.'

Markandeya's words surprised Jaimini. To confirm, he asked again- 'It is surprising that the birds could narrate the content of Mahabharat just like human beings. It is even more surprising that they are proficient in Vedas knowledge, which is even rare to find among humans. Kindly tell me how did they come to acquire such profound knowledge despite having being born in the form of birds. Why do you call them as the sons of Drona?'

Markandeya says- 'Long ago, a strange event took place in Nandanvan involving Indra, Devrishi Narad and some of the elves. One day, Indra was enjoying his time in the Nandanvan forest along with his elves. At the same time Narad also arrived there. Indra welcomed and offered him a seat. The elves also greeted Narad. Indra then said- 'Munivar! Tell me what you desire now? If you desire to listen to a song, should I order the Gandharvas or if you wish to watch the dance, should I order one of my elves, Menka, Rambha, Mishrakeshi or Urvashi? Any of these four can perform a seducing dance before you.'

Narad expressed his desire to watch the dance of an elf, who was superior in beauty to the other elves. This led to a row among the elves. Each one of them was proud of her beauty and talent. Narad then advised them to test their beauty by breaking sage Durvaasa's penance who was at that time staying on a hilltop. All the elves expressed their inability to perform this task successfully.

Only an elf named Vapu, driven by her haughtiness accepted to break the penance of sage Durvaasa.

Accordingly she reached the hill where Durvaasa was staying and began to sing an infatuating song in her sweet voice. Very soon, the song began to show its effect on Durvaasa. Attracted by the sweet voice, Durvaasa went in search of the origin of the voice and found Vapu singing at a distance. Durvaasa understood that the elf had come to break his penance. Angrily, he cursed the elf that she would take birth in the lineage of the birds for sixteen years, she would not bear a child and ultimately would be killed by a weapon to regain her heavenly abode. After saying this, sage Durvaasa migrated to Akashganga.

7.2 Various Creations and Famous Mythological Characters

This chapter contains 9 sections.

7.2.1 Birth of Four Birds

Markandeya says - 'In the lineage of the avian King Garud, there were two brothers- Kank and Kandhar. One day, Kank visited Kailash Parbat where a demon Vidrayudrup, who was a slave of Kuber, was enjoying privacy with his wife and drinking wine. Seeing Kank, the demon showed his displeasure at his arrival at an improper time. But Kank boldly asserted his right on the mountain as according to him, it belonged to all. The infuriated demon decapitated Kank with his sword.

Hearing the news of his brother's killing, Kandhar resolved to kill the demon. After performing the last rites of his brother, he also arrived on the mountain where the demon Vidrayudrup was still drinking wine with his wife. The demon lost his temper again. Kandhar then challenged the demon to have a fight with him. A fierce battle ensued between them. Ultimately, Kandhar killed the demon. The demon's wife- Madanika finding herself in a helpless situation accepted Kandhar as her husband. Thus, Kandhar returned to his palace with a newly found wife. Madanika was in fact the daughter of Menka, the elf and could change her guise at will. After marrying Kandhar, she took the guise of the bird. The bird Madanika was born as elf - Vapu in her next birth due to the curse of sage Durvaasa. Kandhar named her Taarkshi.

A Brahmin named Mandapal had four sons. Drona was the youngest among them and proficient in scriptures, Vedas etc. Kandhar married his daughter, Taarkshi to Drona. After their marriage, Drona and Taarkshi were spending their time happily. Taarkshi conceived during the same time when the battle of Mahabharat was going on. As destiny would have it, Taarkshi flew over the battlefield where she saw Arjuna and Bhagdatt, the king of Pragjyotishpur, fighting valiantly against each other. Accidentally an arrow aimed at Bhagdatt went in the direction of Taarkshi and struck her in the abdomen and tore it apart. As a result of this, four eggs fell on the ground. At the same time, a huge bell fell from Supratik's neck, the elephant of Bhagdatt, and covered the eggs safely.

After the battle of Mahabharat was over, a sage Shami visited the battlefield. There he happened to spot the bell and heard faint chirping coming from underneath the bell. The sage removed the bell and discovered four wingless chicks beneath it. Surprisingly he said to his disciples- 'Look! Falling of these eggs and getting safely covered by the bell simultaneously shows that these chicks are no ordinary birds.' Then he instructed his disciples to carry the eggs to the hermitage and keep it securely at a place safe from predators. The disciples did as told.

7.2.2 Birds Migrate to Vindhyachal

Sage Shami thereafter began to foster the chicks in his hermitage. With time, the chicks grew feathers and began to fly here and there. But every time the birds went out, they returned to the hermitage by evening. The birds also gained Vedic knowledge by hearing the discourses, which sage Shami used to give daily to his disciples.

One day, when sage Shami was preaching his disciples, the birds arrived there and said- 'O great sage! You are like our father because you have protected us. You are our teacher also because we have gained knowledge from you. Now we have grown up, kindly tell us what should we do?'. The birds speaking like learned people amazed the sage as well as his disciple.

He asked the birds- 'Tell us, how did you speak so clearly and is there any curse behind your present condition?'. The birds replied- 'O sage! Long ago, there used to live a sage, Vipulasvan. He had two sons- Sukrish and Tumbaru. In our previous birth, we were the sons of Sukrish. When our father and uncle performed Yagya, we brought them all the required materials. One day, Indra arrived at our hermitage disguised as an aged bird. The aged bird was starving, hence we requested our father to provide him with some food. Upon enquiring by our father, the bird expressed his desire to eat human flesh. Our father tried to dissuade the bird but it did not give up its insistence. Then our father called us and said that he had promised the bird to feed it with human flesh. So, we were asked to donate our body in order to satisfy the bird's hunger. But being frightened, we expressed our inability to meet the demand of the starving bird. This infuriated our father for we were violating his promise that he had made to the bird. He then cursed us to take birth as birds in our next life and himself got ready to donate his body. As our father was breathing his last, Indra resumed his real self and said- 'O great sage! I took this guise only to test your character. Kindly forgive me and tell me what you desire now?' Indra blessed our father to have divine knowledge and penance free from all obstacles. Thereafter we also fell at our father's feet and begged for his pardon. We requested him to take back his words but he said that his words would not go futile. But still he blessed us to have supreme knowledge even in the form of birds.'

Concluding their talk, the birds said- 'O lord! Thus controlled by destiny, our father cursed us. After sometime, we took birth in bird form in the battlefield

where you found us and fostered us in your hermitage. Now we are strong enough to fly long distances. So kindly free us from your obligation.'

Hearing the words of the birds, sage Shami said to his disciples- 'Look! I had already told you that these birds were no ordinary creatures. They even survived the battle of Mahabharat. It shows their greatness.' Then sage Shami granted them permission to migrate to the Vindhyachal. The birds decided to pass their time by studying the Vedas and doing penance as long as they stayed there.

7.2.3 Divine Plays of God

Sage Jaimini reached Vindhyachal and arrived before the birds as per Markandeya's instructions. He said- 'O birds! I am Jaimini, the disciple of Vedavyasa. I have come here with a desire to have your glimpse.' The birds welcomed him saying- 'It is our great fortune that you have arrived here. Your arrival has made us feel as if God himself has arrived.' Jaimini said- 'O learned birds! Kindly listen to the purpose of my visit. Sage Markandeya instructed me to come here and see you. You kindly answer my questions that I have in the context of Mahabharat.' The birds assured him of every possible explanation as per their knowledge. Sage Jaimini proceeded- 'Why did Lord take human incarnation even though He is the cause of the origin, perpetuation and destruction of the universe? How did Draupadi come to be the queen of five Pandavas? How did Balaram expiate for the sin of killing a Brahmin? How were Draupadi's sons attain martyrdom? Kindly narrate all these things in detail.'

The birds say- 'The omnipotent, omniscient and the omnipresent Almighty God is worshipped even by the deities. We salute that Lord Vishnu who is the originator of this universe and who pervades everywhere. We salute Brahma from whose four mouths, the Vedas appeared and sanctified all the three worlds. We bow down at the feet of Mahadev. Those sages who have metaphysical knowledge assert that Narayan exists in four forms, which are both tangible and intangible. His first form is Vasudev, appearance of who is more imaginative in nature. This form exists everywhere and in every ages.

The second form of Narayan is the one that bears the earth on his head. This form of god is known as Shesh. Being Taamasi in nature, this form has taken a serpent incarnation. The third form of God exhibits his divine power and plays. It fosters all the creatures, protects religion, and is known as Pradyumna. Yet another form of God known as Aniruddh rests on the serpent's bed in the abysmal depth of water. It carries out the task of creation.

The third form of God destroys the irreligious demons. In the past, this same form rescued the earth from the abyss in the incarnation of a boar (Varaha avatar) and killed the demon King Hiranyakashipu in the form of Narsimha (lion face with human body). This same form of God has appeared now in Lord Krishna's incarnation.

7.2.4 Draupadi’s Five Husbands

The birds say- 'Frightened by the severe penance of Trishira, Indra killed him to protect his authority and power. But the sin of killing a Brahmin took away Indra's radiance. Trishira was the son of Twashta. Twashta became furious at his son's death. He plucked one strand of hair from his hair-lock and offered it in the sacrificial fire. This resulted into the creation of a formidable and strong demon named Vritrasur. This demon was created with the objective of killing Indra.

Learning about the birth of Vritrasur, Indra sent Saptarishis as emissaries to work out a pact with the demon. The Saptarishis effected a friendship between Indra and Vritrasur. But Indra had other ideas. He took Vritrasur by surprise and killed him. This deceitful action of Indra further enraged the clans of the demons. Soon the atrocities of the demons increased to unbearable limits. Even Prithvi felt unable to bear the burden of their atrocities. She approached the deities and requested them to get her rid of the burden.

Thus, to relieve Prithvi of her burden, the deities began to take incarnation on earth. Dharma and Vayu implanted Indra's radiance in the womb of Kunti. This resulted in the birth of Yudhishthir and Bheema. Then Indra himself produced Arjuna from Kunti. Nakul and Sahadev were born because of Indra's radiance implanted by Ashwini kumars in the womb of Madri. Thus all the five Pandavas originated from the same source even though they appeared as distinct entities, whereas Draupadi was none other than Shuchi, the wife of Indra, produced from the altar in Drupad's palace. In human incarnation, Draupadi got five Pandavas as her husband.

7.2.5 Expiation of Balaram

Shri Krishna's brother Balaram had remained impartial in the battle of Mahabharat. Instead of championing the cause either for the Pandavas or for the Kauravas, he had preferred to go on a pilgrimage. His wife Revati also accompanied him on this pilgrimage. Once while travelling, Balaram drank toddy and entered a beautiful garden known as Raivat. Taking a stroll, Balaram and Revati then reached a hut.

In the hut, many Brahmins were sitting and listening to Sutaji's oration. When the Brahmins saw Balaram, they stood up and felicitated him. Only Sutaji did not stand up. Balaram felt insulted and at once killed him. When Balaram regained his composure after the intoxication receded, he felt guilty for his deed. His belief that killing of Suta would enable him to attain a place in Brahma loka proved to be based on false notion as the Brahmins had shunned him for his deed.

After Balaram realised his folly, he began to curse himself and resolved to observe a twelve-year long fast in order to expiate for his sin. Thereafter,

Balaram migrated to a place of pilgrimage known as Pratiloma Saraswati to carry out his expiation.

7.2.6 Killing of Draupadi's Sons

In Treta Yug, there was a king named Harishchandra. Once he was hunting in the Mahabaahu forest when suddenly, he heard loud cries of a woman- 'Save me! Save me!' It was followed by the cries of many women. Hearing those cries, King Harishchandra shouted loudly- 'Don't be afraid' and dashed in the direction of the cries. The cries however were an illusion created by Vighnaraj, the lord of the obstacles. At that time when King Harishchandra heard those cries, sage Vishwamitra was observing severe penance in the forest. In order to test Harishchandra's virtuosity, Vighnaraj entered his body. As soon as Vighnaraj entered Harishchandra's body, Harishchandra lost his temper and began to abuse Vishwamitra, which enraged him. His anger destroyed all the knowledge, he had acquired due to his severe penance. Seeing the angry Vishwamitra, King Harishchandra began to shiver. With folded hands, he begged Vishwamitra's pardon. He said- 'O great sage! It is my duty to protect the subjects. Kindly forgive me. Your wrath could greatly affect the performance of my duties as a king. Vishwamitra said- 'O king! If you are a true follower of religion, tell me, who should be given a donation? Who should be protected and who should be fought with?' Harishchandra answered- 'O great penancer! Donations should be made only to such a Brahmin who indulges in fast and religious actions. Protection should be extended to those who are afraid and battle should be fought with enemies.'

Vishwamitra said- 'If you are a religious king, give me Dakshina (donation) as I am a Brahmin seeking salvation.' Harishchandra said- 'Tell me your desire. I am ready to grant it. Vishwamitra said- 'O king! Just presume that I have received whatever you would donate me. Now, give me Dakshina for the Rajsuya Yagya.'

Harishchandra said- 'Ask me whatever you wish to have as the Dakshina of Rajsuya Yagya.' Vishwamitra said- 'O king! Give me all you have except your own body, your wife and child.' Feeling pleased, King Harishchandra granted what Vishwamitra desired. Vishwamitra said- 'O king! Tell me, who is the lord of your kingdom?' Harishchandra said- 'Since the moment I have presented this kingdom to you, you are its master.' Vishwamitra said- 'If I am the master of this kingdom, what are you doing here? Leave at once! But before leaving, remove all your clothes, ornaments and other royal insignia and go out wearing tree's bark only.'

Thus after losing his kingdom, King Harishchandra got ready to leave with his wife Shaivya and son Rohit. Vishwamitra then intercepted him and said- 'Where are you going without paying a Dakshina for Rajsuya Yagya. Harishchandra said- 'O lord! I have donated my whole kingdom. Now only our bodies remain with us. What can I give you now?' Vishwamitra said- 'You cannot leave without paying a Dakshina because you have promised me.' Harishchandra said- 'Don't be angry, O Brahmin! I have nothing at present in my position but I will definitely pay you

your Dakshina in due time.' Vishwamitra said angrily- 'Specify the time period within which you will give me my Dakshina or else be ready to get cursed by me.' Harishchandra said- 'I will pay the Dakshina within a month.' Thereafter, Harishchandra started to live in seclusion with his wife and children. Seeing the king's pitiable condition, his entire subjects began to follow him. Seeing their condition, Harishchandra halted and took a look on his subjects. At the same time, sage Vishwamitra also arrived there and began to curse Harishchandra for having attachment towards his subjects. Hearing the harsh words of Vishwamitra, Harishchandra left the kingdom with his wife Shaivya and son Rohit. To drive the king away as soon as possible, Vishwamitra began to beat the queen's back with a stick.

Vishwamitra's abhorrent action enraged the five guardian deities of the directions and they condemned him. Enraged Vishwamitra cursed them- 'O sinners! Go and take birth as human beings.' This curse of Vishwamitra frightened the deities. They begged his pardon. Pleased by their prayers, Vishwamitra said- 'My words cannot be undone. But despite having incarnation of human beings, you will remain bachelors throughout your life. You will never feel attachment and allurement for anybody.' Thus due to Vishwamitra's curse, those five guardian deities took birth as the five sons of Draupadi. Dronacharya's son, Ashwatthama, ultimately killed them.

7.2.7 King Harishchandra

After being thrown out from his kingdom by Vishwamitra, Harishchandra reached the holy town of Varanasi, which was an abode of Lord Mahadev. There Harishchandra saw Vishwamitra standing before him. Vishwamitra said- 'A month has been completed now. Now, give me my Dakshina.' Harishchandra said- 'There is still half an hour in the completion of this month. Please wait. I will give your Dakshina.' Vishwamitra said- 'I will come after half an hour.' Saying this, Vishwamitra departed.

When Vishwamitra left, Harishchandra started to worry as to what would happen to him in his next birth if he did not keep his promise made to a Brahmin. Seeing him perplexed, queen Shaivya tried to console him. She said- 'Man requires a wife only to produce a child. Now we already have a child- Rohit. Hence I am no longer useful for you. You sell me and pay the acquired wealth as Dakshina to the Brahmin.' Harishchandra fainted after hearing his wife's words. The queen began to wail at her husband's condition. Thus wailing, the queen also fell unconscious. The little Rohit also felt perplexed by his parent's condition. He began to cry- 'O father! O mother! I am hungry. Give me food.' At the same time, Vishwamitra arrived there in the guise of Kaal. After sprinkling water on Harishchandra's face, he made him conscious and said- 'O king! Get up and pay my Dakshina. Your sorrows will increase if you do not fulfil your promise.'

Harishchandra was regaining his consciousness slowly but seeing Vishwamitra he fainted once again. This further enraged Vishwamitra. He said- 'O king! If you

have even slightest of respect for Dharma, give my Dakshina at once. I will wait till evening and curse you if you fail to pay my Dakshina.' Saying this Vishwamitra departed. The fear of the curse began to terrorise Harishchandra. Meanwhile the queen also regained consciousness. She once again insisted to sell her in order to pay the Dakshina. This time, Harishchandra accepted her proposal and took the queen to the township. There addressing the crowd, he said- 'O dear citizens, kindly listen to me. I am selling my wife who is dearer to me than my own life. Anybody interested in buying her, please do so before evening.' An old Brahmin stepped forward from the crowd and said- 'I will buy her.' Hearing his words, Harishchandra became extremely sad that he could not even utter a word. The Brahmin then stuffed the money in the bark clothes of Harishchandra and began to drag the queen by her hair. The boy Rohit began to cry holding the hem of her mother. Seeing the condition of her son, the queen requested the Brahmin- 'O Arya! Kindly let me see the face of my child for once.' Then the queen turned towards Rohit and said- 'O son! Your mother is no longer free now. She has become a slave. Do not touch me because I have become an untouchable.'

Then the old Brahmin began to forcibly drag the queen with him. Rohit also followed them crying loudly for his mother. The old Brahmin angrily kicked him. But still the boy did not give up following them. At last, the queen requested the Brahmin- 'O lord! I will not be able to serve you without my son. So kindly buy him also.' Hearing the words of the queen, the Brahmin once again stuffed some more money in the clothes of Harishchandra and tied the boy with the queen and began to drag both of them. Meanwhile Vishwamitra also appeared there and demanded the Dakshina. Harishchandra gave him all the money he had got from selling his wife and son. Seeing that amount of money, Vishwamitra boiled with anger and said- 'O wretched among the Kshatriyas! You call this small amount of money as Dakshina! Now look at the powers of my penance.' Harishchandra trembled with fear and said- 'O lord! Please wait a little more.' Vishwamitra said- 'Now only, a quarter of the day remains. I will wait only for this period and not more.' Saying this, Vishwamitra went away. With stooped face, Harishchandra once again said addressing the crowd- 'Now I am available for sale. Whoever wishes to buy me, please come forward before sunset.' Dharma in the guise of a Chandaal stepped forward from the crowd. He had a huge stinking body. He said- 'I will buy you.' Harishchandra asked- 'Who are you?' The Chandaal said- 'I am a Chandaal. My name is Praveer and I am the resident of this very town.' Harishchandra thought- 'It is better to accept the curse than accepting the slavery of a Chandaal.' At the same time, Vishwamitra also arrived there and said angrily- 'This Chandaal is ready to pay you a lot of money. Why don't you then pay my Dakshina?' Harishchandra said- 'O lord! I am born in Suryavansh. Accepting the slavery of a Chandaal causes great pain for me. I have no money now. Since now onwards, I will be your slave and do whatever you will ask me to do.' Vishwamitra said- 'If you are my slave and ready to obey me, then I sell you to this Chandaal for 1000 gold coins. Go and become his slave.' The Chandaal then presented many villages that were spread

over an area of 100 Yojans to Vishwamitra and tying Harishchandra with a rope dragged him to his town.

In the Chandaal's house, Harishchandra contemplated- 'The queen must be thinking that I would soon get her freed from the slavery of the old Brahmin after paying his dues. But she does not know that I myself have become the slave of a Chandaal.' After a few days, the Chandaal appointed Harishchandra as the supervisor of the cremation place and instructed him to be there present all the time and to cremate each dead body only after thorough investigation. He also instructed him to collect the toll for cremating every dead body and divide it in such a way that one sixth part of the toll goes to the king and from the remaining five parts, three parts should be reserved for him he should take only the remaining two parts as his remuneration. Since that day, Harishchandra began to live in the cremation ground. He always remembered the glorious days of his kingdom, his queen and his son. He had great regret that just because of the anger of Vishwamitra, he lost everything. Very soon, his new found occupation began to show on his appearance. His hair grew long and was unkempt, his body dry and stinking. In this guise, he began to roam in the cremation ground always carrying a stick in his hand. His whole day passed in the assessment of the cremation toll and its division among the various claimants. He had lost his mental stature as he even forgot the count of the days and could not distinguish between the day and night.

One day, a snake bit Rohit as a result of which, he died. Shaivya brought Rohit, crying and wailing to the cremation ground. Even in the unkempt guise, she recognised Harishchandra. Hearing her wailing, Harishchandra went near her expecting to get the clothes of the deceased. There he saw a woman carrying a dead boy wrapped in a black cloth. He could not recognise queen Shaivya but the royal appearance of the boy forced him to think- 'To which royal family did this unfortunate boy belong to? How pitiable, the cruel Kaal did not even spare this boy. My son Rohit would have attained the same age by now.' His silence further hurt the queen who said- 'O lord! O king! How come, you have been living here without caring for your wife and son? We have already lost our kingdom. Now, we have lost our son also. O destiny! Did you not destroy everything of Harishchandra?' Harishchandra began to think who that woman could be and who that dead boy was? 'Isn't she my wife?' Thus recognising his wife and dead son, Harishchandra began to cry loudly and fainted. The queen after seeing her husband's condition fainted too. After sometime both of them regained their consciousness. Then the king took the dead boy in his lap and once again fainted. Queen Shaivya began to wonder why Harishchandra was staying in the cremation ground. For a moment, she forgot her sorrow and began to look at her fainted husband. Then she noticed the stick in Harishchandra's hand. Usually Chandaals used to carry that kind of stick. She became dejected with the thought that she had become the wife of a Chandaal. She then began to curse the destiny and began to wail embracing King Harishchandra and said- 'O king! I don't know whether I am dreaming or it is a reality. I have lost the power of thinking.'

Hearing the words of the queen, the king opened his eyes and narrated the whole events that led to his becoming a Chandaal. Then the queen narrated her experiences and how their son Rohit died because of snakebite. Harishchandra fell on the ground and began to hug his dead son. He was wailing- 'How unfortunate I am that even my wishes are not under my control. Without the permission of the Chandaal, I cannot even commit self-immolation. But now, I will not differentiate between the sin and virtuosity. I will destroy my body in the pyre of my son.' The queen said- 'O king! I am also unable to bear the burden of sorrows. I will also commit immolation with you. Then all three of us will stay unitedly in the heaven. It won't matter to us even if we suffer the tortures of hell.' Then the king arranged a huge pyre and put his dead son on it. With the queen, he began to pray to God. Just then all the deities arrived there led by Dharma. Sage Vishwamitra also accompanied them. They praised Harishchandra. Then Dharma, Indra and Vishwamitra came closer to the king.

Dharma said- 'O king! You have satisfied me with your merits like patience, endurance, truthfulness etc.' Indra said- 'Harishchandra, you are very fortunate. You have won our hearts along with your wife and son. You have even won the heaven with your action. I invite you to stay in heaven along with your wife and son.' Then Indra sprinkled ambrosia on the dead Rohit. Rohit got up and sat up in no time. Harishchandra, his wife and son Rohit were clad in divine clothes and garlands. Indra invited them to stay in the heaven forever but Harishchandra said- 'O king of the deities! Without the permission of this Chandaal, I cannot go anywhere.

' Dharma said- 'O king! I had learnt in advance about the miseries you would suffer in future. That's why I took the guise of a Chandaal and showed you all the grotesque action.' Indra once again invited them to heaven but once again, Harishchandra refused saying that in Koshal, people must have been living mournfully in his absence. 'I cannot leave them in that pitiable condition to enjoy the comforts of the heaven', said Harishchandra. Then, Indra, Dharma and Vishwamitra led Harishchandra to Ayodhya, the capital of Koshal. There they carried out the coronation of Rohit. Thereafter, they took Harishchandra and his queen Shaivya to the heaven.

7.2.8 The Stork and the Partridge

The birds say- O great sage Jaimini! When, King Harishchandra attained his heavenly abode, their family priest, sage Vashishta re-emerged from water. He came to know about the entire development. He was angry at Vishwamitra's stubbornness. He at once cursed Vishwamitra to become a stork.

On the other hand Vishwamitra cursed Vashishta to become a partridge. Thus both of them turned into birds and began to fight. Their fight caused great panic all around. At last accompanied by the deities, Brahma himself arrived at the scene and dissuaded the birds from fighting. But Brahma could not convince them and they continued to fight.

Brahma then destroyed their avian appearances and both the sages regained their original form. Their enmity too ended at the same time. Brahma explained to them that Vishwamitra had not done any harm to Harishchandra. In fact he had felicitated Harishchandra's ascend to the heaven. Both the sages felt ashamed and they embraced each other before leaving for their respective hermitages.

7.2.9 Birth of Living Creatures

Jaimini says- O great birds, how does a living being take birth? How does it grow in the womb bearing all the pain? How does it grow after taking birth? What happens to the soul after death? How does it experience the fruits of his Karmas? The greatest surprise is how does a little foetus survive in the womb. Kindly clear all these doubts.

Birds say- Once upon a time, a Brahmin lived along with his son- Sumati. One day, the Brahmin instructed Sumati to study Vedas under the tutelage of a teacher and himself went to the forest to attain Brahmagyan- the knowledge which frees the soul from transmigration. But due to his laziness, Sumati did not pay heed to his father. When his father repeated his instruction, he simply laughed and said- 'O father! I know everything. I have studied all the Vedas in my various births. I have experienced the darkness of mother's belly for many times. I have suffered thousand kinds of diseases in my previous lives. I have experienced the authority as well as slavery in my previous births. I had killed as well as got killed by others. Hence, I feel, I have all the knowledge and I am sure that I will definitely attain Brahmapad.' Sumati's father was pleased at his son's claims and asked him how he attained such virtuosity.

Sumati said- 'O father! I was a Brahmin in my previous birth. I had attained the designation of Acharya. After sometime, I became a recluse. I was blessed with an extraordinary memory, which I retained even after my death. This is the reason why I remember the self knowledge attained in my previous birth. With the support of this knowledge and religious virtues, I will attempt to attain salvation. Tell me what you expect from me. I will try to fulfil your expectations.' The Brahmin then asked many questions related to life and death. Sumati explained those queries thus:

Those who never tell a lie, who have faith and devotion, only such people die peacefully. Whoever's mind is free from the evils like Kama, Krodh, Moha, Dwesh etc. (lust, anger, affection, jealousy etc.) and who are altruistic in nature and make donations liberally die in peace. Those who lack these virtues suffer great pain at the time of death. As soon as such people sight Yamadoot they begin to cry and call their relatives. But their relatives do not understand their calls. Then the dying person turns away his eyes and grasps for breath. He feels great pain when his soul leaves his body. Even after death, sufferings of such people do not end. They have to undergo scores of tortures in hell. Those who donate umbrella, shoes, clothes and cereals attain heaven. The sinners on the

other hand pass through different hells and take birth as inferior creature in their next lives. After continuous transmigration through lower life forms, these sinners once again take birth as human beings but are imperfect. They remain dwarf, hunched or have any other deformity. Then they pass through all the four castes- Shudra, Vaishya, Kshatriya and Brahmin classes. As their action improves, they might even attain the position of Indra.'

7.3 Description of Different Hells

This chapter contains 4 sections.

7.3.1 Introduction

The Brahmin says- O son! Describe in detail about hell.

Sumati says- O father! Yamadoots carry and lynch those people who eat inedible things, who deceive and dishonour their friends, who indulge in illicit relationships, who desert their wife, and who destroy public properties like garden, water sources etc. Yamadoots tie hands and legs of such people and throw them into the fire. On their way to hell, such people are bitten by crows, storks, wolves, vultures etc. They stay in the inferno for thousand years.

Then they are shifted to another hell named Tama, which is always shrouded in darkness. Sinners who kill the cows and their brothers are thrown into this hell. They panic due to darkness and extreme cold. They get nothing to eat and drink. Moreover, chilling winds aggravates their miseries by making their bones stiff. These sinners then drink their own blood and eat their own flesh. They stay there until all their sins have been attenuated completely.

Then they are thrown into yet another hell named Nikrintan, which revolves like the wheel of a potter. Hoisting the sinners on the wheel, Yamadoots cut their organs but still their sufferings do not end because the cut organs rejoin and get cut repeatedly. This continues for thousand of years. Then the sinners are put in Aprathisth hell where they experience unbearable sorrow and miseries. The sinners are then put in Chakrasankar hell where they are tormented with wheels and huge bells. They are disembowelled and their eyes are also pricked. The sinners have to pass through different hells namely Asipatra, Taptakumbha and Lohakumbha.

7.3.2 Yamadoot and the King of Videha

Sumati says- I was born in a Vaishya family, seven births before this present one. In that birth, I once prevented cows from drinking water. As a result of this sin, I was thrown in the hell named Daarun where I spent one hundred years without a drop of water.

Suddenly one day, cool pleasant wind began to blow, its cool touch gave some relief to me. I saw that a Yamadoot was guiding a gentle looking man. Besides me, all the inmates of the hell felt extreme joy by the sight of that gentleman. The gentleman was asking that Yamadoot as to why he was being taken to the

hell. From the words of that gentleman, it appeared that he was a renowned scholar. That man was in fact the ruler of a kingdom named Videha and was popular as the fosterer of his subjects.

7.3.3 Description of Tortures in Hell

Thus asked by the gentleman, Yamadoots replied politely- 'O king! You once deliberately prevented your wife Pivari from conceiving because you were more attracted to your second wife- Sushobhana. It is because of that action that you have been brought here to undergo severe torture.' The religious minded king said- ' I am willing to go where ever you want to take me, but before doing that I would like to have answers to my questions. I see many people undergoing severe tortures in this hell. Big and frightening crows prick their eyes. Tell me, for what sin they are facing such tortures.'

Yamadoot said- 'O king! Humans suffer or enjoy according to their Karmas. The effect of their Karmas diminishes in proportion to their sufferings. These crows are pricking the eyes of such people who had seduced other women and deceitfully acquired others' wealth. These people will suffer for the same number of years as their eyes blinked during the leering. These crows prick the tongues of those people who had criticised Vedas, deities, Brahmins and teachers. Those who caused differences between friends, husband-wives, father and sons and relatives, or killed the performer of the Yagyas are suffering under the saw. Those who insulted their parents and teachers have been thrown in the pit of pus, faeces and other excretions with their head down. Those who had food before offering it to the deities, guests, servants, father and elders, fire and birds, stay in a pit of pus.

Iron nails are hammered into the ears of those people who gleefully heard the criticism of creatures, deities, Brahmins and Vedas. Those who remarried their daughters to another person despite her former husband being alive are cut into pieces and thrown into saline river. Those who betrayed their friends are tied tightly with a rope. Worms, scorpion, crows and owls then bite their bodies. Those who enjoyed carnal intimacy during daytime or had illicit relations with women are hammered with nails to a prickly Bombax tree. Those who insulted Vedas and fire are thrown from the lofty peaks of mountain. O king! Those who steal gold, those who kill Brahmin, those who drink wine and those who rape the wife of their teacher are burnt in fire.'

7.3.4 Attenuation of Sins

Yamadoot says- As a result of accepting money from a degraded person, a Brahmin takes birth as an ass. A Brahmin who carries out Yagya for a degraded person takes birth as worm after undergoing severe sufferings in different types of hell. A person takes birth as an ass or an inferior bird as a result of abusing his parents. A person who does not worship his tutelary god before eating takes birth as a monkey. Traitors take birth as fish. Those who steal cereals take birth as mice.

A Shudra, who manages to establish intimacy with a Brahmin woman, takes birth as a worm. Similarly, killers of woman and children also take birth as worms. Ungrateful people take birth as worm, insects, grasshoppers, scorpion, crows etc. Encroacher of land takes birth as grass shrubs, creepers and inferior trees. Butchers who kill bulls take birth as eunuchs. Thus a person has to face the result of his Karma according to the gravity of his sins.

Sumati says- As Yamadoot began to push the king ahead, all the creatures in hell gave a loud cry- 'O king! Please stay here for few more moments. The wind that blows towards us after touching your body gives us immense joy. This wind has ended our sufferings and pains. Have pity on us.' The king asked the Yamadoot- 'Why are these people so joyous by my presence? Yamadoot said- 'O king! Initially, you used to sustain your body by the leftovers of the deities, ancestors, guests and ascetics. This is the reason why the wind that blows touching your body causing such pleasure to these people.

' The king said- 'If I can eliminate the sufferings of these sinners merely by standing here, I will definitely stay here.' Yamadoot said- 'No, you cannot stay here. It is a place for the sinners only. Come with us. You will have to enjoy the pleasure of your pious action.' The king said- 'No, I will not go anywhere leaving these poor people in this pitiable condition.' Yamadoot said- 'O king! Look, Dharma and Indra have themselves arrived to escort you to the heaven.

' Dharma said- 'O king! You have worshipped me. Hence follow me to the heaven.' The king replied- 'No, I will not go anywhere leaving these thousands of people in the hell.' Indra said- 'Everyone has to taste the fruits of his Karmas. You cannot help them.' The king said- 'O Indra! Tell me, how virtuous was I in my previous life?' Dharma said- ' Though your pious actions are fathomless, be sure that their significance are not much than drops of water in an ocean, the stars in the sky. The kindness you have shown towards these sinners has further enhanced your virtuosity.' The king said- 'If it is so, may all these people be released from their sufferings by the virtue of my good Karmas.' Indra said- 'O king! By your words, your pious action has increased like the height of the mountain and these sinners have also been released from their sufferings.'

7.4 Famous Mythological Characters

This chapter contains 9 sections.

7.4.1 Greatness of Being Chaste (and birth of Durvasa, Dattatreya, Chandrama)

Brahmin says- O son! Tell me, what should I do now?

Sumati says- Now, you should become a Vanprasthi and lead a life of a Bhikshu by having control over your senses. You will attain that rare Yoga, which helps a man to unite with the almighty after freeing him from the cycles of birth, death and re-birth.

Brahmin says- O son! Now explain to me about this Yoga, which bestows liberation to a man.

Sumati says- I am now describing to you, the same text related with Yoga that was once narrated by Dattatreya to Alark.

The Brahmin asked Sumati- Who was Dattatreya's father? How did he acquire the knowledge of Yoga? Who was Alark?

Sumati says- In ancient Pratisthanpur (modern Paithan) there lived a Brahmin. He was inflicted by leprosy because of the sins he had committed in his previous birth. The Brahmin was very short-tempered and used to scoff at his wife frequently. But his wife was very chaste in character and worshipped him like a deity. One day, the Brahmin ordered his wife to carry him to the prostitute's house, as he had become too weak and feeble. Being chaste, the wife collected some money and began to carry the Brahmin on her shoulders to the home of the prostitute. On their way, they reached a place where sage Maandavya was hanged but still was alive. In the darkness, the woman could not see the things clearly and the Brahmin who was riding her shoulders happened to touch the sage. The sage cursed angrily that whoever had touched him would die before sunrise. Hearing the words of the sage, the Brahmin's wife thundered that there would be no sunrise tomorrow.

Words of the woman came to be true as next morning, the Sun did not rise. Thus the whole world was shrouded in darkness as a result of which, the deities became worried. The deities apprehended that without the occurrence of sunrise, the whole universe might be destroyed. They were also worried that without the differentiation of day and night, how could the months be calculated and the seasons known. Even the calculation of year would be impossible. The chastity of Brahmins wife had forced even the mighty sun to eschew its daily routine. As a result of this, religious activities like Havan, Yagya etc. also came to a halt. Seeing them perplexed, Brahma advised the deities to eulogise Ansuya, the wife of sage Atri. All the deities then pleased Ansuya who assured them to convince the wife of the Brahmin to retract her words. After that, Ansuya reached the Brahmin's hut and said to his wife- 'O fortunate one! May you always serve your husband with full dedication. A chaste woman enjoys half the virtues of her husband, which he earns by his religious activities.'

Brahmini said- 'I am blessed today that the deities have at last glanced at me. Now, tell me, what should I do?' Ansuya said- 'O Saadhvi! In the absence of the day, all the religious activities have ceased to exist. The world is on the verge of extinction. Only your wish can protect the world from imminent calamity. Hence, be pleased now and allow the Sun to rise as usual.' Brahmini said- 'O fortunate one! Sage Maandavya had cursed that my husband would die with sunrise. I cannot afford to lose my husband.' Ansuya said- 'Don't worry, O chaste woman! I will resurrect your husband. So, kindly allow the Sun to rise now.'

Then, Ansuya invoked the Sun by offering water as an oblation. However, the leper-inflicted Brahmin died as soon as the Sun rose. Then by the powers of her penance, Ansuya resurrected the Brahmin and transformed him into a disease-free handsome young man. She also blessed the couple to live for hundred years. The deities were pleased with Ansuya and asked her to seek a boon. Ansuya expressed her desire to give birth to the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh as her sons. The trinity blessed her with this boon. In due course of time, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh took birth as Chandrama, Dattatreya and Durvaasa from Ansuya.

7.4.2 Dattatreya Preaches Kartaveerya Arjuna

Sumati says- O father! After the demise of Kaartaveerya, his ministers and priests decided to crown his son Arjun as their new king. But Arjun refused saying that he would not become the king unless and until he had attained the status of a Yogi. Sage Garg then advised Arjun to worship Dattatreya who had helped the deities to reunite after the defeat of the demons.

Afterwards, Arjun migrated to Dattatreya's hermitage and began to worship and serve him. Pleased by his penance and service, Dattatreya asked Arjun to seek a boon. Arjun said- 'O lord! Kindly bless me with such a power, which enables me to perform my duties as a king in a just manner. May nobody match me in war and may I have one thousand arms. I wish to get killed only by such a person who is more virtuous than me and may I guide the people towards the right path. May nobody in my kingdom remain poor and may my devotion for your lotus feet be eternal.' Dattatreya said- 'O son! All of your wishes shall come true. With my blessings, you shall rule over all the four directions.' Then, Dattatreya crowned Arjun as the king. Large number of people witnessed his crowning ceremony. Soon after becoming the king, Kaar taveerya Arjun ordered that nobody in his kingdom should wield a weapon except him.

7.4.3 Kuvalayashva and the Horse Kuvalaya

Sumati says- O father! Now listen to the tale of a Brahmin named Alark. Long ago, there lived a king named Shatrujit who had a meritorious son, Ritudhwaj. Prince Ritudhwaj had many friends with whom he used to play with. In course of time, two sons of Ashwatar, the king of Nagas became his friends in the guise of Brahmin boys. Both of them were young and good-looking. Both of them used to pass the entire day in the company of Ritudhwaj. They would return to their abode in Paatal loka only at night. On being enquired by their father, they revealed the reason about their late arrival at home. They said- 'O father! Up there on the land, there is a prince named Ritudhwaj. He is the son of King Shatrujit. He is very handsome, gentle, brave, truthful, knowledgeous and meritorious. We enjoy his company.' Ashwatar said- 'Prince Ritudhwaj is really blessed for even the meritorious people like you praise him. But have you done anything to make him happy?' His sons asked- 'What can we do for his pleasure? We find ourselves incapable of pleasing such a person whose riches are even rare for Paatal loka.' Ashwatar said- 'Even then, I wish to hear about the characteristics of your new friend.'

The sons said- O father! Once the prince narrated us a tale, we are going to relate it now. A Brahmin named Gaalav lived in King Shatrujit's kingdom. One day, he arrived in the court of the king riding on a horse and said- 'O king! For the past many months, a wretched demon has been tormenting me and causing severe disturbances in my daily rituals. He is capable of taking any guise at will. Disguising as an elephant, lion, tiger, wolf and many other wild animals, he terrorises me. It has become very difficult for me to do my meditation. One day in my frustration, I let out a deep sigh. As soon as I did so, this divine horse descended from the sky. I heard a heavenly voice, which said- 'O Brahmin! This horse is capable of circumambulating the entire earth without getting tired. It can climb lofty mountains effortlessly and can also run in all the three worlds with the same speed. Hence, this horse shall be renowned as Kuvalaya. Riding it, the son of King Shatrujit will kill the demon that torments you day and night. 'O king! That is the reason that I have arrived in your court with this horse. Kindly accept it and instruct your son to ride it and kill the demon.' King Shatrujit saw his son Ritudhwaj off with the Brahmin riding that divine horse.

7.4.4 Kuvalaya goes to Patal Loka, Killing of Demon Patal Ketu and Marriage with Madalasa

Prince Ritudhwaj stayed in the hermitage of sage Gaalav and helped him to perform his Yagyas without any problem by clearing all the minor obstacles. The demons were not aware of his arrival in the hermitage. One day, a demon arrived in the hermitage disguised as a wild boar and began to rub his bushy head against the body of sage Gaalav. Seeing this, his disciples began to scream. Prince Ritudhwaj at once rode the horse and wielding a weapon dashed after the boar. The prince injured the boar with an arrow, which was sickle-shaped. The demons fled from the scene. Prince Ritudhwaj followed the boar everywhere it went on the mountains, in the forests and on the riverbank. He was determined to slay the demon that had been disturbing the sage for long. Ultimately, the boar jumped into a pit. Ritudhwaj also followed it but could not see the boar anywhere in the pit. Instead he saw a beautiful town which could have matched even the abode of Indra. He entered the town where he saw an extremely pretty girl who was walking briskly. Ritudhwaj tried to know about her destination but she ignored him and climbed the stairs of a palace. Ritudhwaj also followed her and in the palace, he saw a beautiful girl sitting on a bedstead. As soon as the girl saw him, she fainted. Her beauty attracted even Ritudhwaj. He assured her that there was nothing to be afraid about. Then the same girl whom Ritudhwaj had sighted earlier came there and began to fan the fainted lady. The prince enquired about the reason of her unconsciousness. But the girl did not say anything. Instead she whispered something in the ears of her friend who then said- 'O stranger! This is the daughter of Vishwavasu, the king of Gandharvas. Her name is Madalasa. One day, while she was playing in her garden, a demon Paatalketu abducted her. Since then she stays here in his captivity. On the coming thirteenth day of this month that demon will marry her. But he doesn't deserve to be her husband. Yesterday, she was ready to commit

suicide but the cow Surabhi, assured her that a man from the earth would come and kill the demon. Only he would be suitable for my friend. I am her friend. My name is Kundala. I am the daughter of Vindhyavan and wife of Pushkarmali. My husband had been killed by the demon Shumbh. Since then I have been touring various places of pilgrimage in order to receive salvation. That wretched Paatalketu had taken the guise of a boar but a brave man has injured him with his arrow. I have arrived here only to investigate who is that man. Do not worry about my friend's unconsciousness. She has fainted because of your infatuating handsomeness. She has begun to love you but her problem is that only that man can marry her who has injured the boar. This thought has caused her to lose her consciousness. Now reveal your identity.'

Ritudhwaj said- 'I am the son of King Shatrujit. I have been staying in the hermitage of sage Gaalav to protect the sages. Just a few days back, a boar arrived in the hermitage and began to torment the sages. I have injured that boar with my arrow. Now I have arrived here following that boar and happened to see you.'

Hearing the words of Ritudhwaj, Madalasa felt shy as well as extreme joy. Kundala then said to her friend- 'The prince speaks the truth. Words of Surabhi cannot go wrong.' She then said to Ritudhwaj- 'O brave man! Doubtlessly you have killed the demon, Paatalketu. My friend Madalasa is blessed now. Now its your duty to marry my friend and take her home as your bride.' Ritudhwaj said- 'How can I marry your friend without the permission of my father. I am still not fully independent.' Kundala said- 'Please do not say this. My friend is a divine beauty. Marry her right now.' Prince Ritudhwaj then agreed to marry Madalasa then and there. Madalasa happily remembered their family priest Tumbaru who arrived there instantaneously. In the presence of sacred fire, Tumbaru carried out the rituals of marriage and tied them in nuptial knot. Thereafter blessing the newly wed couple, Tumbaru and Kundala took to their respective paths.

On the other hand, when Ritudhwaj and Madalasa started off riding the horse, Kuvalaya, demons' army surrounded them. A fierce battle followed. In no time, prince Ritudhwaj slayed the entire army and reached his kingdom. There he narrated the whole incident to his father Shatrujit. King Shatrujit felt very much pleased by the prowess of his son and blessed them heartily. Thereafter, Ritudhwaj came to his palace with his wife Madalasa. They then began to live happily.

7.4.5 Separation of Madalasa

The newly-wed couple had hardly spent few months together when King Shatrujit once again instructed Ritudhwaj to travel across the entire earth and see whether the Brahmins were performing their religious duties without any obstacles. Ritudhwaj obeyed the dictates of his father. He used to scale vast distances for the whole day and returned to his wife only at night. One day he noticed that a sage was staying at the bank of river Yamuna. He was in fact Taalketu, the younger brother of Paatalketu. But the prince could not recognise

him. That sage approached Ritudhwaj and requested him to extend his protection over his hermitage, as he was about to start Yagyas. He also begged for the precious necklace of the prince on the pretext that he had nothing to pay as Dakshina. The gullible prince gave his necklace to the sage. Then instructing the prince to guard the hermitage and promising to return soon, the sage left.

In fact, the sage who was actually a demon arrived in the court of King Shatrujit. Madalasa was also present in the court. He said- 'Prince Ritudhwaj sacrificed his life fighting with the demon while protecting my hermitage. Before his death, he gave me his necklace. His horse has been captured by the demon. I have brought this necklace to you to inform you about that sad incident.' After giving the necklace to Madalasa, the demon returned to the hermitage.

Hearing the news of her husband's death, Madalasa also gave up her life. Mourning soon enveloped the entire palace. Seeing the death of his daughter-in-law, Madalasa, King Shatrujit was in a dilemma as for whose death should he mourn. A little contemplation led him to the conclusion that it would be futile to mourn his son- Ritudhwaj's death because he had died for a noble cause. But his daughter-in-law had followed the steps of her husband, so her death should be mourned for. The queen also supported the king. Thereafter the king performed the last rites of both of them.

When Taalketu returned to his hermitage, he found Ritudhwaj still standing alert. In a sweet tone, Taalketu said- 'I am obliged by you, O prince! Staying here with unwavering mind, you have executed my desired task. I have met my objective, so you may go now.' Prince Ritudhwaj then returned to his palace riding his horse.

7.4.6 Madalasa is Reborn

When prince Ritudhwaj reached the capital, everyone expressed his pleasure with surprise. Ritudhwaj met everyone happily and went to the palace of his parents. Though the king and the queen blessed him but sad expression on their face surprised the prince. Upon enquiry, the king related the entire incident and also how his wife Madalasa had died. The news of Madalsa's death shocked Ritudhwaj. Then consoled by his parents and friends, prince Ritudhwaj carried out the necessary consecrations to pacify the soul of his dead wife. He had decided never to marry again.

The sons of the Naag said- 'O father! Now prince Ritudhwaj lives like an ascetic. He never casts his eyes on women and only indulges in playing with people of his age. Hence all we can do for him is to keep him happy.'

Hearing the entire tale, Naagraj fell in deep thought. After sometime he said to his sons with a laughter- 'O sons! Now I will do such a thing that will bring back the smile of Ritudhwaj.' Saying this, Naagraj Ashwatar reached Plakshaavataran, a place of pilgrimage at the foothills of Himalayas along with his brother Kambal. There they began to do severe penance to please Goddess

Saraswati. At last, Saraswati appeared before them and asked them to seek a boon. Ashwatar requested her to bless both of them with a sweet and melodious voice. After granting them this boon, Goddess Saraswati disappeared. By her blessings, Ashwatar and his brother, Kambal became famous singers. Then they began worshipping Lord Shiva singing sweet and melodious hymns. Pleased by their prayers, Lord Shankar also asked them to seek a boon. At that Ashwatar said- 'O lord! I wish that Ritudhwaj's wife Madalasa takes birth as my daughter.' Lord Shankar said- 'With my blessings, your wish shall come true. During the Shraadh period, you yourself take the middle portion of the Pind (food offered to dead ancestors) and contemplating on me, offer oblations to your ancestors. Madalasa will emerge from your 'middle-hood'.

Bowing before Lord Shiva thereafter, both the brothers returned to their kingdom in Paatal loka. Ashwatar organised a Shraadh in the same way as told by the Lord and consumed the middle portion of the food offered to the ancestors. Then contemplating on the desired object, he let out a deep sigh. Instantaneously, Madalasa emerged from his 'middle-hood'. Ashwatar did not reveal this fact to anybody and made adequate arrangements so that she could live in secrecy.

Thereafter one day, he instructed his sons to bring their friend Ritudhwaj to the palace. Both the sons once again joined the company of Ritudhwaj. One day while playing, they insisted him to visit their palace. The prince gladly accompanied them. In Paatal loka, he was amazed to see his Brahmin friends getting transformed into serpents. They took Ritudhwaj through the streets and lanes of their kingdom. Ultimately they reached the palace of Ashwatar. Introducing Ritudhwaj, the serpent princes said- 'O father! This is our brave friend, Ritudhwaj.' Ritudhwaj greeted Ashwatar respectfully and received his blessings. Ashwatar said to him- 'Long live O prince! My sons always sing praise of your divine virtues. I request you to stay with us for a few months and enjoy the pleasures of Paatal loka.'

7.4.7 Ritudhwaj Reunites with Madalasa

Ritudhwaj stayed in the palace of Ashwatar. Naagraj did his best to keep Ritudhwaj happy and forget the sorrow of his wife's separation. During his stay, Ashwatar tried many times to coax Ritudhwaj into revealing his heartiest desire. But every time Ritudhwaj intelligently avoided the topic. Once, King Ashwatar, in Ritudhwaj's presence, asked his sons what should be done to please him. They informed the king that nothing less than Madalasa would please the prince most and that the prince was eager to see his deceased wife once more.

Prince Ritudhwaj also said shyly that he would be greatly obliged if Naagraj could help him to have a sight of his deceased wife. Ashwatar said- 'O son! If you wish to see the illusion, come on, have a sight of your deceased wife.' Saying this, Naagraj called Madalasa who was staying secretly in his palace and asked Ritudhwaj- 'Take a good look, O son, if she is your wife.' Seeing his wife

before him, the prince fainted. When he regained his consciousness, he stepped forward to touch her but Ashwatar stopped him cautioning that she was not real but illusionary and would vanish as soon as he touched her.

Hearing this, Ritudhwaj once again lost his consciousness. When he regained his consciousness, he uttered nothing but 'She's mine! She's mine!' Seeing the pitiable condition of the prince, Naagraj revealed the whole story of Madalsa's resurrection. Ritudhwaj became extremely joyous after re-uniting with his wife. Then he contemplated on his divine horse as a result of which, it appeared within a moment. Riding the horse, prince Ritudhwaj returned to his kingdom with his wife Madalasa.

7.4.8 Birth of Madalasa's Sons

After returning to his father's kingdom, Ritudhwaj narrated the whole incident to his parents of how he regained Madalasa. Then they began to live happily. After many years, King Shatrujit crowned Ritudhwaj as the king. After King Ritudhwaj's accession to the throne, Madalasa gave birth to her first son. Ritudhwaj named the child as Vikrant. After sometime, Madalasa gave birth to her second son whom Ritudhwaj named as Subahu. Subsequently, their third son was born and named Shatrumardan. After the naming ceremony of the third son, Madalasa could not help laughing, as she was very amused by such a name given to her son. The metaphysical knowledge, which Madalasa gave to her three sons, had helped them to become ascetics. When their fourth son was born, the king sought her approval on the name being given to him. This made the queen laugh. The king asked her to name the child. Madalasa named this child as Alark.

Hearing the name, the king ridiculed its relevance. Madalasa said that the names have significance only for worldly matters. She also reminded the king about the futility of the names given to their previous children. As Madalasa began to preach her fourth son about the metaphysics, the king stopped her by saying that she had already preached all the three sons on the path of renunciation. He requested her to spare the fourth child so that he could grow up and become the king one-day. Madalasa then blessed her son- 'You are blessed my son because you will rule the earth without obstacles. Now cultivate in your heart the desire to do well to others. Never caste your eyes on women other than your wife. Always contemplate on Murari to destroy the evil thoughts in your heart.'

7.4.9 Preachings of Madalasa

Madalasa used to preach the little prince while played. When Alark attained boyhood, he asked- 'O mother! What should I do in order to mastery over physical and metaphysical matters? How can I serve my subjects in the best possible way?'

Madalasa said- 'Looking after the welfare of the subjects religiously is the supreme duty of a king. He should always be alert against the activities of his

enemies. With the help of spies, the king should keep a watch on the activities of his minister so that he could not make friends with the enemies. It is unwise for the king to trust everybody but under certain circumstances, he may trust even his enemies. A king must control his lust but at the same time, he should make efforts to increase the boundaries of his kingdom. Surrendering to sensual comfort is like death for a king. A king should appear as all pervasive and omnipresent. Fostering the subjects with total righteousness enhances the wisdom of the king.'

7.5 Duties of People Belonging to Various Ashrams

This chapter contains 2 sections.

7.5.1 Varnashram Dharma

Alark says- 'Tell me about the duties of the different classes and stages of life.'

Madalasa says- 'Donation, study and Yagya, these three are the religion of a Brahmin. Performing Yagya for others, teaching and accepting donation are the three vocations of Brahmin. Donation, study and Yagya are also the religious duties of Kshatriyas. Protection of land and using weapons are vocation for Kshatriyas. Religious duties of a Vaishya are also same like that of the Brahmins such as donation, study and Yagya. For a living, Vaishya may take up animal rearing, agriculture and trade as profession. Serving all these three above mentioned castes as well as making donations and performing Yagya are the religious duties of a Shudra. Tilling the earth, serving Brahmins, feeding animals, selling and purchasing items are professions of a Shudra. A person belonging to Dwij class may relatively enjoy freedom until his sacred thread ceremony has not been performed. After the sacred thread ceremony, he should come to stay at the home of his teacher and observe celibacy strictly while studying scriptures. There he is expected to serve the Guru sincerely. At the completion of education, he should pay Dakshina to his Guru. He may get married and start the second stage of his life that is Grihasthashram. He should then subsequently opt for Vanprastha and Sanyaas respectively.

After the completion of education and paying all the dues, the disciple is ready to start second stage of his life that is Grihasthashram. For this he should first find a suitable girl from his caste and get married. Grihasthashram is considered as the best stage of life. It is in itself a complete Yagya. As a householder, he is expected to foster those who are dependent on him. During this stage of his life, he should earn his livelihood by occupations ascribed for his caste. He should please the deities by performing Yagyas, his ancestors by making oblations, Prajapatis by producing children, spectres by offering sacrifices of cereals and society by showering love. Even the ascetic and celibates depend on married people for their daily bread. Hence married life or Grihasthashram is stated to be superior among all the Ashrams.

A Grihastha must welcome and treat even his unexpected guests with great warmth. A householder who fails to satisfy his guest never succeeds in religious

matters. The Yagyas that are offered in such households go futile. Hence it is not proper for the householder to show ego and abuse a guest otherwise he will have to expiate for it later.

When the children of the householder grow up and his body becomes senile, he should go to the forest after relinquishing the world. There, he should pass his time by indulging himself in austerities and religious activities. This stage is known as Vanprasthashram and is most necessary for the sanctification of his soul. This stage is followed by Sanyaasashram- the stage, which requires complete renunciation, celibacy, control of senses and anger etc. The virtues like truthfulness, sanctity, non-violence, tolerance, forgiveness, kindness, generosity and contentment are the religious merits applicable to all the Ashrams equally. Those who abide by their religion stay in the abode of Brahmaji till the reign of fourteen Indras. The king punishes those who violate this religious code. If the king doesn't punish them, he is himself destroyed. Hence a king must first of all abide by the duties as prescribed for different Ashrams in his life and only then he has the right to punish those people who violate these dictates. '

7.5.2 Duties of a Grihastha (Householder)

Alark says- What are the duties of a married man by discharging which he becomes free from all kinds of bondage and attains salvation. Kindly tell me about these things.

Madalasa says- O son! Those people who discharge their duties as a householder by fostering all the living beings attain to the heaven automatically. All the living creatures of the world including the deities and the dead ancestors are dependent on their nurturing on the householder. They always look at the face of the married man for their living. In fact, Grihasthashram can be compared to a cow that fosters others with her milk. All the four Vedas are present in this 'cow' that is Grihasthashram. Entire universe is reflected in this Ashram.

Daily after the bath in the morning, a Grihastha must perform oblations to the deities, to the sages, Prajapati and ancestors by offering water to them. Then he should perform a Yagya and offer cereals in the sacrificial fire. There are certain places in the house, which are reserved for specific deities and where offerings are made to them. Sacrifice to Brahmaji should be offered in the central part of the home, to Vishwadeva in the eastern side of the home, to Dhanvantari in the northern side, to Indra again in the eastern side, to Yama in the southern side, to Varun in the western side and to Soma in the northern side of the home. At the threshold of the house, sacrifice should be offered to Dhaata and Vidhaata. One must sit facing the south while offering sacrifice to his dead ancestors. For the dogs and birds, sacrifices should be given on the ground in the morning and evening. At the arrival of a guest, a Grihastha must worship him by offering water, cereals, flowers etc. as per his financial condition. If possible, a Grihastha should feed one or more Brahmins in order to pacify his ancestors. He should

give alms to a beggar and a celibate. Without giving alms, a Grihastha must not proceed to dine. He should also feed starving and diseased people first. Such kind of living definitely benefits a Grihastha.

7.6 Shradha and its Rituals

This chapter contains 4 sections.

7.6.1 Regular and Causal Duties

Madalasa says- O son! A Grihastha has three kinds of duties- regular, causal and a combination of both. Rituals, which are connected with oblations and carried out daily, are called regular duties. Rituals and consecrations performed at the birth of a child are called causal duties. Yearly performance of Shraadh for the dead ancestors is a combination of regular and causal duties. Now listen about the causal duties.

At the time of a child's birth, different kinds of rituals and consecrations are carried out in the household. During the time of marriage ceremony also, many more rituals are carried out. At the time of marriage however, performance of the Shraadh named Naandimukh is a must. During the Shraadh, the host should sit facing the north or the east and offer a loaf made of barley flour and yoghurt. Then he should circumambulate around two Brahmins and worship them.

Rituals and Shraadh carried out in the household after the occurrence of any death in the household comes under the category of causal duties. During the Shraadh period, all kinds of sacred activities are forbidden. Only the use of Kusha grass is permitted. Donation of 'Pind' comprising of barley flour, yoghurt, honey etc. is made for only one time to pacify the soul of the dead person. Then oblation of water with sesame seeds should be offered in the name of the dead person. This ritual should continue for a year- once every month. After a year, Shraadh is organised in which one, three or five Brahmins are fed. Thereafter, every year, during the darker phase of Ashwin month, a Shraadh should be carried out for the dead ancestors. This ritual is a combination of regular and causal duties.

Sages have made provision for appeasement of dead ancestors up to the last seven generations. Cereals, which the people offer in the name of their dead ancestors, pacify those souls who stay in Pishaach Yoni. Water falling on the earth at the time of wringing the clothes after one's bath pacifies those souls, who have taken the form of vegetation after their death. Water falling during the bath satisfies those souls who have attained the status of deities. Cereals that fall during the lifting of Pind satisfy those souls who are in lower life forms. The cereals that scatter here and there and swept aside satisfy souls of those people, who had died in their childhood before the accomplishment of any consecration. The waste water falling down while Brahmin washes his hands after dining and pacifies all the other souls.

Every month, during the waning phase of the Moon or on the day of Amavasya, Shraadh should be carried out. Besides it, eighth day of darker phase in the month of Paush is also good for carrying out Shraadh. If a virtuous Brahmin is available, time of solar and lunar eclipses is also good for Shraadh. The time when the Sun crosses the equator during its northward and southward journey is also good for Shraadh. Apart from these above mentioned situations, one can also organise Shraadh in the following circumstances- at the time of great calamity, availability of items suitable for Shraadh, after a nightmare, during the period of birth Nakshatra and during the period of unfavourable stars etc. On the first day of the Shraadh, a virtuous Brahmin should be invited while the host must observe total restraint. It is said that such a man, who indulges in sexual intercourse on the same day after carrying out Shraadh or eating food of Shraadh, causes his dead ancestors to sleep in semen for one month. Ancestors of such a man, who performs Shraadh immediately after having a sexual intercourse, drink urine and semen for one month. Hence a virtuous Brahmin, whom the host is intending to feed, should be informed about the Shraadh one day earlier in advance. If a Brahmin is not available, a true celibate can be fed on the day of Shraadh.

After the Brahmin has carried out all the necessary rituals, Havan, oblation etc., he must be formally insisted to dine. All kinds of edible items that a Brahmin may wish to eat should be offered. While reciting the Rakshodhn mantra, grains of sesame and mustard should be scattered on the ground. After the Brahmin has dined, he should be offered with water to wash his hands and some cereals that should be scattered on the ground with his permission. Then sitting on the seat of Kusha grass, the host should offer a Pind made of sesame seeds, barley flour, sugar, ghee etc. An oblation of water should follow it. At the end, the Brahmin should be seen off with proper Dakshina. Only then the host is free to dine himself along with other invited guests and family members.

7.6.2 Dos and Don’t During a Shraadha

Madalasa says- O son! I am now narrating about the do's and don'ts to be followed during Shraadh. Many kinds of edible items can be offered in the Shraadh. These include cereals like barley, wheat, rice, millet, corn, etc., fish, flesh of deer, rabbit, bird, wild boar, goat and Neelgai (antelope). All these kinds of items are capable of pacifying the soul of dead ancestors for different period of time depending on the nature of offerings being made. Likewise cereals offered in sacred fire cause satisfaction for one month. Fish causes satisfaction for two months. Flesh of deer causes satisfaction for three months. Flesh of rabbit causes satisfaction for four months. Flesh of bird causes satisfaction for five months. Flesh of wild boar causes satisfaction for six months. Flesh of goat causes satisfaction for seven months. Flesh of different types of deer and antelope causes satisfaction for eight, nine and ten months respectively.

Food items made of cow's milk and ghee and kheer cause satisfaction to the dead ancestors for one year. Different varieties of rice, barley, millet, wheat, sesame, moong dal, mustard etc. are extremely satisfying food for the

ancestors. Different types of pulses and corn can also be offered. Use of garlic, carrot, onion, radish, refined salt, red gum, gourd etc. is prohibited. Water that is stinking, frothy, stale or otherwise incapable of quenching a cow's thirst should also be discarded. Milk of doe, camel, goat, buffalo and other one-hoof animals, yak and such a cow that was milked for the past ten days is also forbidden for use in Shraadh. Soil that is infested with insects, dry, baked with fire, stinking or collected from an unholy place should not be used. Similarly, such people who are violent, wretched, killers of Brahmins, impotent or have fiendish characters should not be involved in the Shraadh. Cocks and pigs should also be kept away from the place of Shraadh. This is the reason why sesame seeds are scattered at the site of Shraadh secretly. The host must not see a woman in menses. It is also not necessary to feed a host of Brahmins. Instead it is sufficient to feed only one meritorious Brahmin with complete devotion and respect. It is enough to appease the dead ancestors. Appeasement of ancestors automatically lead to appeasement of the deities, planets, Nakshatras and all whose blessings can transform the living condition of the person.

7.6.3 Auspicious Days and Months

Madalasa says- Shraadh can be performed on any day during the dark lunar phase in the Hindu month of Ashwin i.e. from the first day to the Amavasya. Performing of Shraadh on any of these days brings the following benefits- Performing Shraadh on the first day or Pratipada brings monetary gain. Shraadh performed on the second day brings prosperity, Shraadh performed on the third day blesses the performer with a boon. Performing Shraadh on the fourth day leads to the destruction of enemies. Performing Shraadh on the fifth day gives benefit from a woman; Shraadh performed on the sixth day helps a man to acquire respect in the society. Shraadh performed on the seventh day makes the performer an able leader; Shraadh performed on the eighth day enhances the intelligence. Shraadh performed on the ninth day brings the company of the attractive women. Shraadh performed on the tenth day leads to the fulfilment of all the desires. Performing Shraadh on the eleventh day helps him to attain the knowledge of Vedas. Shraadh performed on the twelfth day makes the performer victorious. Shraadh performed on the thirteenth day leads to long life and luxuries. Shraadh performed on the fourteenth day and Amavasya lead to the fulfilment of all the desires.

Fruits of Shraadh performed during different Nakshatras:

NAKSHATRA RESULT:

KRITIKA Abode in heaven
ROHINI Increase in progeny
MRIGSHIRA Radiance
ARDRA Bravery
PUNARVASU Increase in land property
PUSHYA Improvement in health
ASHLESHA Sons

MAGHA Help from relatives
PURVAPHALGUNI Good fortune
UTTARAPHALGUNI Increase in the virtues
HASTA Increase in greatness
CHITRA Beauty and handsome personality
SWATI Increase in trade
VISHAAKHA Increase in progeny and fulfilment of desires
ANURADHA Respect
JYESHTHA Dominance
MOOLA Disease-free life
PURVAASARHA Popularity
UTTARASARHA Freedom from sorrows
SHRAVAN Attainment of auspicious abode
DHANISHTHA Immense wealth
ABHIJIT Knowledge of Vedas
ABHIJIT Knowledge of medical science
SHATABHISHA Increase in animal wealth
PURVABHADRAPAD Increase in knowledge and cattle
UTTARABHADRAPAD Receiving of precious metals like gold and silver
REVATI Receiving of horses
ASHWINI Increase in average life
BHARANI Prosperity and increase in comforts

7.6.4 Forbidden and Permitted Items

Madalasa says- O son! Now, I will tell you the do's and don'ts for healthy living. Stale cereals, oil and fats stored over a prolonged period of time, items prepared from wheat and barley and food items which is not prepared from pure ghee or milk should not be consumed. Flesh of turtle, porcupine etc. is worth eating whereas flesh of village pigs and cocks should not be consumed. Brahmin can eat flesh offered to him in a Shraadh. Things like conch, stone, gold, pearl etc. are purified simply by washing in water. Cereals either touched or washed by unwarranted people is not fit for any purpose. Flesh of animals killed by Chandaal or killed for the purpose of oblation in Shraadh is also considered pure. Seat, bed, vehicle, boat, grass, rays of the Sun and Moon and air are naturally pure things. Touch by a woman who is in her menses, dog, jackal, a mother who has recently given birth to a child, a Chandaal, carriers of the brier etc. is defiling in nature. A person however can become pure once again by taking bath if touched by any of these people and animals. One should not neglect the appearance of blood and cough. Excretions and water collected after washing the feet should be thrown out of the home at once. Getting touched by the people who criticize deities, ancestors, Yagya, mantra etc. is also defiling. Sighting of the Sun however purifies the defiled person.

Duties of the woman: Different male and female deities dwell at the threshold of the home. Hence this portion of the home should be worshipped properly everyday. At dawn, the threshold should not be left vacant or it may have adverse effect on one's lineage. The whole area inside the home should be

plastered with cow dung daily or washed with pure water. All these activities should be carried out by the better half of the householder. Those women, who prepare food during the last quarter of the night, suffer from infertility in future births. Those women, who do not sweep their home in the evening, remain unmarried and are bereft of wealth in future births. Such women also lose their wealth, life-span and reputation. Kicking the following things like broom, hearth and mortar etc. or touching them with feet also leads to the loss of progeny and wealth.

The householder should not use broken seat, board and black blanket for sitting purpose. He should not comb his hair while facing south. Those who do not dine, perform Havan or make donations at the appropriate time are no better than eunuchs. Those who shun these activities despite having wealth are worse than mice. Those who do not respect the deities, teachers, wife of the teacher, cow, Brahmin etc. are boycotted by the society. Naked are those who are devoid of Vedas, other religious scriptures and rituals. Such a house is really contemptible, which is boycotted by the Brahmins and where daily routines are not followed regularly.

After birth or death in the family, a Brahmin becomes purified in ten days. During this period of ten days, he should avoid all the religious activities. In similar conditions, a Kshatriya gets purified in twelve days after a birth or death in his family, a Vaishya in fifteen days and a Shudra in one month. Dead body of a person should be cremated outside the boundaries of the village. His family members should offer oblation of water to pacify his soul on the first, fourth, seventh and ninth days after the cremation. Ashes should be collected from the fourth day. In case of deaths caused by a snake bite or poisoning family members may get purified after a day. There is no impurity in case of the death of a child, an immigrant and the one who has renounced everything. Even their cremation is not carried out nor oblation of water is made.

If one more death occurs in the family while the mourning period of the earlier death is still continuing, impurity of the second death lasts as long as that of the first one. Similar rules are applied to the impurity caused by the birth. Thus abiding by these norms, the householder can easily attain the four objectives of life that is Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha.

7.7 King Alark and his queries about Yoga

This chapter contains 9 sections.

7.7.1 King Alark Receives a Ring

After reaching youth-hood, Prince Alark got married. By that time, his father King Ritudhwaj had also grown old. Hence before Grihastha, he crowned his son as the new king. At the time of crowning, queen Madalasa presented him a ring and said -

'O son! This ring contains a note which will teach you on how a king should administer the kingdom.' Saying this, Madalasa blessed Alark and left the palace with her husband Ritudhwaj to spend their lives in the forest.

7.7.2 Wisdom of Alark

After his accession to the throne, King Alark ruled justly. In due course of time, he got many sons. He followed the dictates of Dharma, Arth and Kama while ruling his kingdom. Inspite of enjoying all the luxuries, Alark still could not experience bliss and felt as if he was missing something in his life. Very soon, Subahu came to learn about the royal luxuries of his brother Alark and got tempted to enjoy the same luxuries. To attain his objective, Subahu took the help of the king of Kashi. The king of Kashi sent an envoy to Alark with a message to give the kingdom to Subahu, which Alark refused. Instead, he sent a reply that the request must be made by Subahu himself. 'I will not give him my kingdom out of fear of war,' said Alark. But Subahu did not pay heed and with the help of the king of Kashi, launched a massive attack on his kingdom and conquered it. Now Alark's days of sorrow had begun.

He then remembered the ring presented by his mother Madalasa. He opened the ring and found a letter in it. The letter said- 'When you lose your everything, give up the company of your present advisors and join the company of learned sages.' This message made Alark to pine for the company of the learned sages. Very soon, he went to the refuge of Dattatreya and requested him to remove his miseries. Dattatreya assured him of removing his miseries at once but before doing that, he wanted to know the reasons for his miseries. Alark said- 'I do not long for pleasures but my elder brother wants to grab my kingdom.'

7.7.3 Dattatreya Preaches Alark

Alark says- 'O lord! With the arising of disenchantment in my heart, I have no miseries now. Only those people feel drowned in the ocean of miseries who are attached to worldly things. A man feels all kinds of sorrows due to his attachments towards the luxuries in which his mind indulges. Now neither sorrow nor joy can affect me.'

Dattatreya says- 'O king! Whatever you said is correct. Attachment is the cause of both sorrow and happiness. It is because of the knowledge I gave to you that the 'mist of attachment' has disappeared from your heart. A small sprout of ego ultimately develops into a huge tree of ignorance. Affection is the trunk of this tree. Home and family are the branches and wife and children are the leaves of this tree. Wealth and cereals are the flowers and happiness and sorrow are the fruits of this tree. Relation that emerges out of affection is the canopy of this tree. This tree grows day by day and obscures the path of liberation. This tree is full of desires and those who sit under the lee of this tree can never attain salvation. Hence felling of this tree is of foremost importance for a person desirous of attaining 'Brahmajitva.'

7.7.4 Yogadhyay

Dattatreya says- O king! With the attainment of knowledge, people come to conjugate with the Supreme Almighty and which results into dispersion of their ignorance. To attain Moksha, it is necessary for a man to shun attachment first of all. Only after that, he will become free from sorrows. When he becomes free from sorrow, he unites with the supreme almighty. This phenomenon is known as Yoga. Unification with the supreme almighty enables a man to attain knowledge and finally Moksha (salvation). It is therefore essential for the all those seeking salvation that first of all they should renounce affection and attachment for the worldly objects including their near and dear ones.

Knowledge and renunciation are nothing but two sides of the same coin and one is necessary to give rise to the other. Home is nothing but the place for staying, food is nothing but the energy required sustaining our body and knowledge is nothing but an aid to attain salvation. Anything that caused obstacles in the way of salvation is ignorance. A living being is bound to receive the fruits of action no matter whether they are good or bad. Hence one should carry out his duties without bothering for the results. With the attenuation of the results of the action performed in the previous births, a living being becomes free from the cycles of life and death. With the attainment of Yoga, Yogis take refuge in none other than Brahma. But the path of attaining Yoga is indeed difficult, if not impossible. One has to conquer his soul first of all because the soul itself is regarded as invincible. Control of physical impurities with the help of Pranayam, sins by determination, lust by self-restrains and contemplation on God are the ways to conquer the soul.

7.7.5 Perfection in Yoga

Dattatreya says-During the process of conquering the soul, different kinds of allurements begins to divert the mind of the Yogis. It is imperative for the Yogi to keep his mind busy by observing fast, worshipping and contemplating in God. It is the duty of the Yogi to always contemplate on God, only then he can seek solace in Him. Thus, after controlling his senses, a Yogi ought to eat and sleep less, attain unification with the Supreme Being. O king! A Yogi unifies with Brahma once his physical and mental faults are removed. Then, he never separates from the Supreme Being.

7.7.6 Daily Routine of a Yogi

Alark says- O lord, now kindly narrate about the daily routine, a Yogi should abide by in order to preserve his piousness.

Dattatreya says- O king! Respect and insult are the two reasons for love and hatred. Yogis attain perfection by understanding insult as respect and vice versa. A Yogi should therefore never attend social functions like Shraadh, marriage ceremonies or other festivities. He should not accept the hospitality of others and should shun unnecessary journeys. A Yogi should seek alms only after the householder and his family has dined. A Yogi should accept alms only

from those households whose inmates are gentle, religious and free from blemishes and should accept things like whey, milk, fruits, edible roots, gram flour etc. Before going to dine, a Yogi should offer his food to the deities reciting he following mantras-

PRANANYAY SWAHA
AAPANAY SWAHA
SAMANAY SWAHA
UDANAY SWAHA
VYANAY SWAHA

After reciting these mantras one by one and offering food to the deities who are present in his body as different forms of air, the Yogi may now proceed to dine.

Control of senses and greed, celibacy, renunciation and non-violence are the five resolutions of a Yogi. Control of anger, service to the Guru, sanctity, eating less and studying Vedas regularly are the five norms for a Yogi. A Yogi must practice meditation at a desolate place, forest, cave or peak of a mountain. A true celibate has full control over his speech, mind and action. Iron and gold have equal worth in his eye; he loves no one and hates no one.

7.7.7 Description of Omkar

Dattatreya says- Those Yogis who abide by their resolution are never degraded from their supreme position. Such Yogis always recite Om while contemplating on the eternal God. 'A', 'U' and 'M', these three syllables constitute the body OM or AUM. These three syllables represent the virtues (gunas) of Sata, Tama and Raja respectively. Thus, by contemplating on God and reciting Om, a Yogi ultimately achieves unification with that eternal spirit. But there are still some disastrous traps that a Yogi should guard himself against, otherwise his entire penance might turn futile at the time of death. Hence every Yogi must be aware of these disastrous traps.

7.7.8 Description of Disastrous Traps

Dattatreya says- A person who is unable to see the path of the deities, or the heavenly bodies like- Dhruv, Shukra (Venus), Soma (Moon), or his own shadow or Goddess Arundhati, must understand that his death is near. For those people to whom, the Sun appears without radiance but fire appears as the Sun, die within eleven months. Sighting of gold and silver in urine or stools signifies death within ten months. Those who see ghosts, Gandharvas and gold tree in the dreams live for nine months only. Those who become fat or thin suddenly live for eight months more. Those Yogis whose heels appear cracked while walking on sand or mud die within seven months. Getting perched on the body by volatile birds like vulture, pigeon, owl, crow etc. indicates that the concerned person will live for only six months. Those who see their shadow in opposite direction live for four or five months more only. Those who sight lightning without clouds or rainbow during the night time, in their dream live for two or three months more. Those who cannot see their reflection in ghee, oil, water and mirror die within a month. A person whose body smells like a cadaver die

within fifteen days. Those whose hands and feet remain dry even after taking bath and dry even after taking light refreshments live only for ten days. Those who sight hair, cinders, ash, snakes and dried rivers in the dream, die on the eleventh day. Those who feel hungry even after eating to their fill also die soon.

O king! There are many more disastrous symptoms that indicate death. A Yogi must always be alert regarding these signs. Whenever a Yogi perceives the appearance of all or some of these disastrous symptoms, he must at once take to Yoga to minimise the effects.

Brahmagyan- A Yogi experiences extreme joy when he meditates while doing Yoga. Only then can he experience Brahma. Physical body is ephemeral; hence a true Yogi does not mourn over the loss of physical body. Hence, a Yogi must train his mind in Yoga ignoring sorrow or affection. This is indeed a difficult task to achieve.

Alark says- O Brahmin! By your blessings, my ignorance has ended. Now I will do everything so that ignorance does not grip me once again.

Then taking Dattatreya's permission, Alark went back to the king of Kashi and said- 'O king! You have a desire for the kingdom, so take this kingdom and enjoy its luxuries yourself or give it to Subahu.' The king of Kashi asked Alark as to why he was renouncing the kingdom without fighting a war. He also tried to instigate Alark by saying that his conduct did not suit the Kshatriyas. Alark said- 'Only Brahma is truth, all the other things are false. Now controlling my senses, I will attain perfection in Yoga.'

7.7.9 Alark Masters Yoga and Penance of Jada and his Father

Words of Alark pleased the king of Kashi. Even, Subahu got up gladly and after embracing Alark said to the king of Kashi- "O king, I had taken your refuge to win the kingdom. Now, I have got it without fighting a war and without a drop of blood being shed. But, I am leaving now, renouncing everything."

The king of Kashi said- "Subahu, why had you taken refuge in me? What have you received now?"

Subahu said- "O king! My younger brother Alark had been so far indulging in luxuries despite having metaphysical knowledge. He was in fact experiencing miseries in his household. When the miseries cross all limits, only then renunciation arises in the mind, as is the case with Alark. That was why I had taken your refuge. My job is finished now. So I am leaving to attain perfection in Yoga. O king, I regard those people who ignore their near and dear ones in their miseries as heartless.

Such people are degraded from their position of Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha and are criticised everywhere."

The king of Kashi said- "O Subahu, You have salved your brother Alark. Now kindly salve me also."

Subahu said- "Attainment of Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha are the four major objectives for the attainment of which humans have been created. You have already attained Dharma, Artha and Kama. Only Moksha remains to be attained now. 'It is mine', 'It is me' etc. are expressions of ego. Guarding the self from these thoughts is the true knowledge. A man must know 'What is to be known? 'Who is to know?' and 'Who is he?' A knowledge of these automatically leads to the knowledge of all." Saying these words, Subahu left the palace.

The king of Kashi too returned to his kingdom. Alark crowned his elder son as the new king and he began to practice Yoga in a forest. After many years of rigorous practice, Alark attained salvation and his abode in Brahma loka.

The Brahmin's son said- "O father! Now you too must take refuge in Yoga in order to attain Brahma. I too will try to attain salvation."

The birds say- "O Brahmin! Thus the father and son began their penance and attained salvation.

7.8 The Universe and Lord Brahma's Manifestation

This chapter contains 8 sections.

7.8.1 The Origin of the Universe

Jaimini thanked the birds for enlightening him with self-knowledge. But he was still not satisfied. There were many questions to which he had no answers. He asked the birds-

'How did this universe come into being? What will happen to it during the time of final annihilation? How did the deities, the sages, the ancestors and the living creatures originate? How did the Manvantaras arrive? I am anxious to know about all these things.'

The birds replied- 'O Jaimini! We salute the same Jagannath who creates in the form of lord Brahma, nurtures the world as Lord Vishnu and ultimately annihilates the world as Lord Shiva in his most terrifying form. We will now reveal the knowledge which was once narrated by sage Markandeya.'

The birds then narrated the following tale as was originally told by sage Markandeya. 'In the beginning of creation, as soon as lord Brahma manifested himself, all the four Vedas and eighteen Puranas came out from his four mouths. Lord Brahma then created the Saptarishis merely by wishing, who took all the Vedas and Puranas in their possession.'

'Later on, sage Chyavan got the Puranas from one of the Saptarishis- sage Bhrigu and read out its contents to the assembled sages. The sages then retold

the Puranas to Daksha. Daksha narrated the contents of the Puranas to me (Markandeya). The virtues of listening to Puranas are capable of destroying all sins of a man. Now I am going to reveal to you that secret knowledge of Purana as was told to me by Daksha.'

'Brahma- the cause and effect of everything pervades the universe even after the final annihilation. All the three gunas are present in him. When the time is appropriate for commencing the process of creation, the whole atmosphere is covered by the great element (Mahatatva), which itself comprises of the three basic gunas- Satva (pure), Rajas (semi-pure) and Taamas (dark).'

'Ego manifests itself from the great element (Mahatatva). Even the ego remains covered by the great element. The ego then creates 'Shabda tanmatra' (subtle forms of matter related with sound). The sky which symbolizes the Shabda (sound) is created from this very Shabda tanmatra.'

'The ego then covers the whole sky. After that Sparsh tanmatra (subtle forms of matter related with touch) comes into being. Air, which signifies the quality of touch, then comes into being. After the creation of air, light is created without which the forms and appearance cannot be perceived.'

'The deformity of life results into the creation of Rasa matra. From this very Rasa matra, water comes into being. The water is enveloped by the Roop matra (subtle forms of appearance). The water then gets deformed and as a result Gandha matra comes into being, from which the earth is created. All the worlds are established in this earth.'

'First of all, the gunas enter into the atoms and create the seven basic elements which are a must for procreation. The seven basic elements then establish themselves in Purusha and Prakriti. The union of Purusha and Prakriti results into the creation of egg. This egg keeps expanding in its size while being in water.'

'Lord Brahma who is also known as Kshetragya and who is also the creator of all the souls dwells in that egg.' The same Brahma pervades all the three worlds. All the creatures of the world including the deities, demons and human beings along with islands, mountains, oceans, air and sky etc. are present inside the egg.'

'The Mother Nature along with the great element covers this egg. This way, the seven natural coverings envelop the egg. Beyond the Prakriti (nature) is established the Purusha (Almighty).'

'Now I am going to reveal the identity of Brahma to you. Just as drops of water fall down from the body of a wet man immersed in water, in the same way, Lord Brahma too discards off the egg in the end. The nature is nothing else but

Kshetra (space, area) and Brahma is also known as Kshetragya. This way, the whole creation came into being just like lightning.

7.8.2 Lord Brahma's Life Span

Kraustuki said- 'Tell me! O lord! How were the living beings created as the period of final annihilation was approaching its end.'

Markandeya replied- 'When the nature establishes herself in the soul of the Purusha (supreme Almighty), all the created matter gets annihilated. Prakriti and Purusha are established in the mode of parallelism. During that period, Satva and Tama become neutrally balanced. Even the quality of Rajas establishes itself within the qualities of Satva and Tama.'

'The life span of Brahma consists of Dwiparardha. The day and night of Brahma are of equal duration. Brahma is the origin of this universe. He is the inconceivable soul- the supreme lord and the cause of all the events. He is beyond the reach of activities. He enters into Prakriti and Purusha- excites both of them to get unified. When Prakriti gets excited, the Supreme Lord manifests Himself in the egg as Brahma. He then commences his creation. The same Brahma attains the form of Vishnu due to the effect of his Satva guna and nurtures the whole creation. Under the influence of Tamo guna, He attains the form of Rudra and finally annihilates the whole creation. He then goes into hibernation.'

'This way, the same Almighty God in his three different forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh performs his duties of creation, nurturing and annihilation respectively. The life span of Brahma consists of one hundred years. The division of time is as follows- One Kashtha consists of fifteen Nimeshas. One Kala consists of thirty Kashthas whereas thirty Kalas make one Muhurta. One day and night of this material world consists of thirty Muhurtas. Thirty days and nights are equivalent to one month or two fortnights (Pakshas).'

'Six months make one Ayan. Two Ayans make a year. A day and night of the deities are equivalent to one year of this material world. Similarly twelve thousand years of the deities make the four Yugas. Satya Yuga consists of the four thousand years of the deities. Treta Yuga consists of three thousand years of the deities. Dwapar Yuga consists of two thousand years of the deities whereas Kali Yuga consists of one thousand years of the deities. Similarly Sandhya (evening) period of Satya Yuga consists of four hundred years and Sandhyansh (part of evening) consists of the same period that is four hundred years. Thus the total number of years that Satya Yuga has come up to 4000+400+400= 4800 years. In the same way, the Sandhya and Sandhyansh of Treta Yuga consist of 300 years each. Thus, the total number of years in Treta Yuga comes up to 3000+300+300= 3600 years. Sandhya and Sandhyansh period of Dwapar Yuga is of 200 years each. Thus the total number of years in Dwapar Yuga comes up to 2000+200+200= 2400 years. Sandhya and

Sandhyansh period of Kali Yuga are of 100 years each. Thus the total number of years in Kali Yuga comes up to 1000+100+100= 1200 years.

A day of Brahma consists of thousand times of the twelve thousand years of the deities. Fourteen Manus appear in succession during the whole day of Brahma. Each Manavantar comprises of a Manu and his progenies, Indra and the other deities, Saptarishis ganas and Nripati ganas etc.

A Manavantar consists of seventy-one Chatur Yugas. On the basis of the years of this material world, a Manavantar consists of 30,67,20,000 years or 8,52,000 years of the deities. A Brahma's day consists of 4,29,40,00,000 years of this world or 1,19,28,000 years of the deities. The dissolution, which occurs at the end of the day of Brahma, is also known as causal dissolution (Naimittik Pralay). During the time of causal dissolution, all the residents of Bhur, Bhuva and Swarga lokas temporarily go to Mahar loka. The residents of Mahar loka shift their base to Jana loka. The entire universe is submerged in the ocean during the time of causal dissolution and this is the time for Brahma to take rest i.e. at night. Brahma starts his creation at the end of the night. This way, after the completion of three hundred and sixty years of Brahma, his one-year is complete. One hundred such years of Brahma make one Para and five hundred such years make one Parardha. One Parardha of Brahma has already passed at the end of which Padrama Mahakalpa occurred. The present period, which falls under the second Parardha, is also known as Varaha Kalpa.

7.8.3 Natural and Flawed Creations

Kraustuki asked curiously- 'Tell me how Brahma did his creations?'

Markandeya replied- 'When Brahma got up from his sleep after the end of dissolution (Pralay) named Padrama, he found a void all around himself. He remembered Narayana who is also known by the name of Nastanu i.e. one who dwells in water. Narayana was engrossed in his eternal sleep. After waking up, he rescued the earth, submerged in the ocean just like he had done in the previous Kalpas by taking the forms of a boar, a fish and tortoise etc. But even after the earth was brought up from the seabed and was established above the ocean, it was still swinging like a boat. Narayana then created the mountains to stop the earth from swinging. But the mountains were burnt down by Agni (fire) named Samvartak. The mountains submerged into the ocean. The mountains after having displaced the water had become fixed at their respective places. Therefore, Narayana divided the whole earth into seven islands and created the four lokas just like before. After that, five Avidyas came into being. This way, the whole creation established themselves in five ways. The whole creation was hidden in darkness till this period. After this, Narayana created the ignorant animals, which symbolised the Tamo guna. After the animals the deities who symbolised the Satva guna were created.'

'Brahma was extremely satisfied by the creations of Narayana. But he was desirous of creating even more superior creatures. As a result a group of

Sadhakas named Arvaksrota came into being. These Sadhakas were humans who possessed Rajo guna. The fifth creation of Anugraha was itself sub-divided into four parts- Viparyaya, Siddhi, Shanti and Shrishti. The sixth creation was of those special people who had the knowledge of past and present events. These people had wives, enjoyed life in a balanced way but were of evil nature. These people were known as Bhutadik.'

'The first creation was related with the manifestation of lord Brahma himself. This great creation was known as the Maha Shrishti. The second creation related with the part of Brahma is called Bhutsarga. The third creation is called Prakrit and which consists of creatures possessing intelligence and flawed sensual perceptions. The fourth creation consists of the Sthawars who are unable to move (e.g. Vegetation). The fifth creation consists of four-footed animals. The sixth creation consists of the deities whereas the seventh creation that of human beings which originates from Arvaksrota. The eighth creation is known as Anugraha. The ninth creation of Brahmaji is known as Prakrit (natural) and Vikari (flawed). These are the nine types of creation of Brahma. The root causes of this universe are Prakrit and Vikari.'

7.8.4 Creation of the Deities

Kraustuki then asked Markandeya about the origin of the deities. Markandeya replied- 'With the objective of creating the deities, demons, ancestors and human beings, Brahma abandoned the part of his physical body in the ocean. The demons originated from the thighs of his abandoned body. Lord Brahma blessed the demons with physical bodies, which were Taamasik in nature. This part of Brahma's body became famous as Ratri (night). After that Brahma created the deities from his mouth with the help of Satva guna. The deities were given pure bodies. This part of Brahma's body which was Saatvik (pure) in nature became famous as day.'

'After this, Brahma acquired another physical body and created the ancestors. After creating the ancestors, he abandoned his body, which transformed itself in the evening. Brahmaji then acquired another body, which was affluent of Rajas qualities and thus was created human being. He again abandoned his body and from it was created Jyotsna- the transition period of day and night.'

'Jyotsna, evening and day contain the quality of Satva in themselves. Night has the quality of Taamas in itself. The deities, demons and human beings are most powerful during the day, night and Jyotsna period respectively. The ancestors are most powerful and invincible during the evening time.'

'Brahma then created creatures who had moustaches and beard on their face. Some creatures among them started attacking the others. Those who were being attacked and pleaded 'save us' were called the Rakshasas (demons). The attackers who thundered 'we would devour you up' were known as Yakshas (celestial beings).

'Brahma was very displeased by their tantrums. Some of his hair fell down on earth and thus were created the snakes. The flesh-eating Ganas were next to be created. These Ganas were extremely volatile in nature. After that, Brahma created the Gandharvas.'

'This way after having created these eight types of divine creation, Brahma created all the animals and birds from his body. He created the goat from his mouth, lamb from his heart, cow from his stomach and back, animals like horse, elephant, donkey, rabbit, deer, camel and mule were created by Brahma from both his legs. Variety of vegetation and medicinal plants were created from the hair of his body.' 'Brahma then created the following things from the first of his four mouths- Gayatri, Tri- rik, tri- vrit, Saam, Rathantar and Agnishtom. From his mouth facing south, he created Yajuh, Traishtumchhand, Panchadasha-stom, Vrihatsaam and Uktha. From his mouth facing west, he created Shaam, Jagatichhand, Panchadasha-stom, Vairoop and Atiraatra. From his mouth facing north, he created twenty-one Atharva, Aaptoryaam, Aanushtubha and Vairaaj.'

'In the beginning of Kalpa, Brahma created the natural things like lightning, Vajra, cloud, rainbow and birds. After that he created the deities etc. He then created stable things like mountains, living creatures that could move, demons, birds, animals and snakes etc. All these living creatures take birth and re-births, reap the fruits of the past Karmas done in their previous life. This is the way Brahma had done creation at the end of the dissolution period.'

7.8.5 Copulative Creations

Markandeya says- Brahma created one thousand couples from his mouth in the beginning of creation. These couples were radiant and possessed virtuous qualities (Saatvik). Once again, Brahmaji created one thousand couples from his chest but this time they possessed the quality of Rajas. This phenomenon was repeated for the second time and once again one thousand couples manifested themselves from his chest. These couples were both Rajas as well as Taamasik by nature. At last Brahma created one thousand more couples from both his legs. These couples were completely Taamasik by nature. The couples started copulating and this process has been continuing since then.' 'Brahma now became worried as to how to accommodate such a large number of people. Initially, these people used to roam about every where, as there were no permanent residences to accomodate them. At the arrival of Treta Yuga, they developed attachment and started living in houses. Subsequently they started living in various types of abodes- Pura, village, Dronimukha, Shakhanagar, Kharvatak, Drami, Gram and Sanghosh etc.'

7.8.6 Daksha’s Lineage

Markandeya says- 'Brahma on seeing that inspite of all his creations the population was not increasing, he decided to create his Manasputras. These Manasputras were created merely by his wish. Their names were Bhrigu, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Angira, Marichi, Daksha, Atri and Vashishta. After this,

he first created the ferocious Rudra and then Sankalpa and Dharma. But all these people were very virtuous, knowledgeable and unaffected by worldly desires. They showed their disinclination towards the purpose for which they have been created by Brahma i.e. increasing the population. Brahma became very furious in his anger and created an entity whose half portion resembled a man's body while the remaining half resembled that of a woman.

Brahma instructed that entity to bisect his body into two distinct forms of a man and a woman. The entity followed Brahma's instruction and this way Swayambhu Manu and Shatrupa came into being. Manu accepted Shatrupa as his wife. Two sons were born to them- Priyavrata and Uttanpada. Apart from these two sons, two daughters were also born to them- Akuti and Prasuti. Prasuti was married to Daksha while Akuti was married to Ruchi. Twenty-four daughters were born to Daksha and Prasuti out of which thirteen of them were married to Dharma. The remaining eleven daughters were married to sages like Bhrigu, Mahadev, Marichi, Angira, Atri etc.'

'Dharma fathered Kama from Shraddha. Shri gave birth to Darpa, Dhriti and Niyama. Tushti gave birth to Santosh, Pushti to Lobha, Medha to Shrut, Kriya to Dand, Buddhi to Bodh, Lajja to Vinay, Vapra to Vyavasaay, Shanti to Kshema, Siddhi to Sukh and Kirti gave birth to Yash. Kama, the son of Dharma was the father of Atihrishta.'

'Himsa- the wife of Adharma gave birth to Anrita. Anrita was married to Nirriti. Two sons named Narak and Bhaya and two daughters named Maya and Vedana were born to them.'

'Maya gave birth to Mrityu, whereas Dukha was born as a result of Narak's marriage with Vedana. Five children were born to Mrityu- Vyadhi, Jara, Shoka, Trishna and Krodha. All of them were very irreligious by nature and they never got an opportunity get married and have progenies.'

'Mrityu's wife- Nirriti is also known by the name of Alakshmi. Altogether fourteen sons were born to them. All these fourteen sons of Mrityu dwell in the organs of human beings, during the time of destruction. Out of these fourteen sons, ten dwell in the sense organs of human beings and the eleventh son dwells in the mind. They influence the sense organs and the mind of a man in a negative way by means of attachment and anger. The twelfth son exists in the form of arrogance. The thirteenth son- Apar adversely affects the intelligence of a man.

The fourteenth son- Duhsah resides in the house of males. Duhsah is naked, always hungry, his mouth facing downwards and caws like the crow.

7.8.7 Descendants of Duhsah

Markandeya says- 'Nirmashti, the wife of Duhsah was the daughter of Yama. Altogether sixteen children were born to Duhsah and Nirmashti. Out of them

eight were sons and the remaining eight were daughters. The name of the sons were- Dantakrishti, Tathokti, Parivarta, Angadhruka, Shakuni, Ganda, Pranrati, Garbhaha and Sasyaha while the names of the daughters were Niyojika, Virodhini, Swayamaharini, Bhramani, Rituharika, Smritihara, Beejhara and Vidveshini. Dantakrishti causes the teeth of the child to make a grinding sound. Tathokti is commonly used while men are conversing by saying, 'So be it' (TATHASTU). Parivarta becomes happy by establishing an alien foetus in the womb of women. Angadhruka causes the organs of human beings to throb and enables him to express the emotions of joy and sorrow. Shakuni resides in the bodies of birds like crow and animals like dog or fox.'

'Ganda destroys all the virtues. Garbhaha destroys the foetus in the womb of a woman while Sasyaha destroys all kinds of wealth.'

'Among the daughters, Niyojika encourages a man to have illicit relationship and also to steal the wealth of others. Virodhini causes differences between husband and wife and also among the family members. Swayamaharini destroys the prosperity of a man. Bhramani causes restlessness and anger in the heart of a man living at one place for a long time. Rituharika destroys the menstrual cycle of women. Smritiharika causes loss of memory. Beejhara destroys the sexual powers of a man and woman. Dweshini causes jealousy in the heart of a man and woman. Altogether 38 children were born to all the 16 children of Duhsah and Nirmashti. All of them were wicked and caused miseries to people.'

7.8.8 The Creation of Rudras

Markandeya says- 'Now I am going to tell you about Rudrasarga. One of the eight sons of Brahma started wailing after being created from his (Brahma) body. Brahma asked him as to why he was crying. The crying child requested Brahma to give him a name. Brahma named him as Rudra since he was wailing at the time of his birth. But even after getting his name, the child's wailing did not stop. He wailed for seven times and as a result seven more children were manifested from his cries. Brahma named these seven children as Bhava, Sharva, Ishaan, Pashupati, Bheem, Ugra and Mahadev. He also gave them abodes so that they could live. The following eight things respectively symbolize the forms of all these eight rudras- Sun, water, earth, fire, air, sky, Dikshit Brahmin and Soma. All these eight rudras were also given their respective wives who were Suvarchala, Uma, Vikeshi, Swadha, Swaha, Dik, Diksha and Rohini.'

'The eight sons of all the eight rudras are Shanaishwar, Shukra, Lohitaang, Manojav, Skand, Sarg, Santaan and Buddh respectively.'

'Rudra had accepted Sati as his wife. Sati gave up her life because her father Daksha had shown disrespect to her husband- Rudra. Sati took her second birth as Parvati, the daughter of Himavaan. Mainak was her brother. Bhava married Parvati. Khyaati was Bhrigu's wife. They had two children- Dhata and Vidhaata. Lakshmi was the consort of Narayana. Meru had two daughters- Aayati and

Niyati. Both of them were married to Dhata and Vidhaata respectively. Each one of them had two sons. Aayati had named her son as Pran while Niyati named her son as Mrikandu. The same Mrikandu is my (Markandeya) father. My mother's name is Manaswini and my son's name is Vedashira.'

'Sambhuti- the wife of Marichi gave birth to Paurnmaas. Smriti- the wife of Marichi gave birth to four daughters- Siniwali, Kuhu, Raka and Anumati.'
'Ansuya, the wife of sage Atri gave birth to three sons- Soma, Durvaasa and Dattatreya. Dutt and Dambholi were born to Preeti, the wife of Pulastya. He became famous as Agastya during the time of Swayambhuva Manavantar.'

'Three sons- Kardam, Arvaveera and Sahishnu were born to Kshama, the wife of Pulaha. Sannati, the wife of Ritu gave birth to 60,000 Balkhilyaganas. Urja- the wife of Vashishta gave birth to seven sons- Raja, Gatra, Urdhwabahu, Sabal, Anagh, Sutapa and Shukra. These seven are famous as the Saptarishis.'

'Agni was married to Swaha. Three sons were born to them- Paavak, Pavaman and Shuchi.'

7.9 The Various Manavantars

This chapter contains 10 sections.

7.9.1 Swayambhuva Manavantar

This Section contains 6 sub-sections.

Markandeya says- 'Swayambhuva Manu had ten sons. He had divided the whole earth into seven continents. In the beginning of Treta Yuga, the sons of Priyavrata had done the same. Prajavati- the daughter of Kardam Prajapati had ten sons and two daughters from Priyavrata. Names of these ten sons were- Agnighna, Medhatithi, Vayushmaan, Jyotishmaan, Dyutimaan, Bhatya, Savan, Medha, Agnibaahu and Mitra. Among all these ten sons, the last three never ruled any kingdom.

The remaining seven sons were made the rulers of all the seven continents by Priyavrata. Agnighna was made the ruler of Jambudweep, Medhatithi that of Plakshdweep. Vayushmaan was given Shaalmalidweep whereas Jyotishmaan was made the ruler of Kushdweep. Similarly, Dyutimaan was given Kraunchdweep to rule while Bhatya was given Shaakdweep. The seventh son, Savan was made the ruler of Pushkardweep. Savan had two sons- Medhaavi and Dhaataki. Savan sub-divided the Pushkardweep into two parts and each part was given to each of the sons. Bhatya had seven sons- Jalad, Kumar, Sukumar, Marnaavak, Kushottar, Medhaavi and Mahadrum. Bhatya too sub-divided the Shaakdweep into seven parts and distributed them among all his sons. Similarly, Dyutimaan too had seven sons to whom were distributed his kingdom Kraunchdweep after sub-dividing it into seven parts. Jyotishmaan, Vayushmaan and Medhatithi made their respective sons the rulers after giving them kingdoms. Agnighna was the ruler of Jambudweep. He had nine sons. His

kingdom was equally distributed among all of them. Naabhi- the son of Agnighna was the father of Rishabh. Bharat was the son of Rishabh. Bharat was given the southern part of Rishabh's kingdom. Our country is named after Bharat.'

7.9.1.1Jambudveep
Markandeya says that the total area of Jambudweep comprises of one lakh Yojan while the area of Plakshdweep is twice the area of Jambudweep i.e. two lakh Yojans. Similarly, Shaalmali is twice the area of Plaksh while Kusha is twice the area of Shaalmali. The area of Kraunchdweep is twice the area of Kushdweep whereas the area of Shaakdweep is twice the area of Kraunchdweep.

The island of Pushkar is twice the area of Shaak. Seven mountains are situated in all these seven islands. They are Himavaan, Hemkut, Rishabh, Meru, Neel, Shwet and Shringi. Ilavrit is situated in the middle of six mountains, which themselves are situated in the middle of the ocean surrounding all the seven islands named earlier. Sumeru Mountain is situated in the central part of Ilavrit. People belonging to all the four castes- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra reside in Ilavrit.

Just above Ilavrit are the dwelling places of Lokpals like Indra etc. Lord Brahma's assembly is situated at the center. Beneath Ilavrit are situated the four mountains- Mandaar, Gandhmaadan, Vipul and Supaarshva. These four mountains are situated in each of the four directions. The Great Mountain Nishadh is situated towards the west of Meru, while the Great Mountain Pariyatra is situated just behind it. Towards the south of Meru are situated the great mountains, Kailash and Himavaan. The mountains Shringvaan and Jaarudhi are situated towards the north of Meru Mountain. River Jambu flows all around the Meru Mountain in a circular path.

7.9.1.2The Origin of the Ganga
Markandeya says- 'River Ganga originates from a place named Dhruvaadhar. This particular place is related with Narayana. River Ganga, then falls on the Sumeru Mountain and gets distributed into four main streams. One of these streams flows towards Chaitrartha forest. The name of this particular stream is Sita. The same Sita Ganga enters into the Varunoda reservoir and from there, it moves towards the ocean and again changes its course to get submerge into that stream of Ganga, which has fallen on the Gandhmaadan Mountain and which is known as Alaknanda. Alaknanda after submerging into Mansarovar subsequently entered the Mahadri Himalaya where Lord Shankar held her in His locks of hair. He released river Ganga only at the request of sage Bhagirath.

After being released, river Ganga got sub-divided into seven streams and ultimately, all those seven streams submerged into the ocean. The stream of Ganga which originates from the west of Sumeru Mountain is known as Suchakshu. This stream gets submerged in the ocean towards the south, after

passing through many mountains. The fourth stream reaches Savita forest after passing through two mountains- Suparshu and Meru. This particular stream is famously known as Bhadrasoma. Bhadrasoma Ganga ultimately get submerged into the ocean after passing through mountains like Shankhkoot and Vrishabh etc.

7.9.1.3A Description of Bharat-Varsha

Kraustuki asked Markandeya- 'O lord! Please describe about Bharatvarsha.' Markandeya replied- 'Bharatvarsha is surrounded by oceans on all its three sides. People living towards the east of Bharatvarsha are known as Kiraat while people living towards the west are called Yavan. The central part of Bharatvarsha is inhabited by all the four castes- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The seven mountains are situated in the central part of Bharatvarsha. They are Mahendra, Malaya, Sahaya, Shaktimaan, Riksh, Vindhya and Pariyatra. There are thousands of hills situated in the vicinity of these seven mountains. The central part of Bharatvarsha is sub-divided into Janpadas. The residents of these Janpadas are known as Mlechha and Arya. All the major rivers of Bharatvarsha like Ganga, Saraswati, Sindhu, Chandrabhaaga, Yamuna, Shatadru, Vitastaa, Irawati, Gomti, Vipaasha and Gandki etc. originate from the mountains situated in the central parts. The names of the prominent Janpadas situated in the central part of Bharatvarsha are Matsya, Ashwakoot, Kulya, Kuntal, Kashi, Koshal, Arbuda, Kalinga, Malak, Vrik etc. River Godavari flows towards the north of Sahya Mountain.

A city named Govardhan is situated near this mountain. Some other prominent places situated in the vicinity of this mountain are Bahalik, Vaataghaan, Aamir and Kaaltoyak. Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudras live in the following states- Shudra, Pahalav, Charmakhandika, Gandhaar, Yavan, Sindhu, Sauveer, Bhadrak, Shatadruj, Paarad and Kekaya. The following states are situated in the north of Bharatvarsha- Taamas, Hansmarg, Kashmir, Shulik, Kuhak, Urna, Darva etc. States like Abhrarak, Mudgarak, Antagiri, Plawang, Mal, Daamal, Vartik, Uttarbrahma, Praagjyotish, Madra, Videha, Tamraliptak, Malla and Magadh are situated in the east of Bharatvarsha. States situated in the south of Bharatvarsha are Paandya, Kerala, Chola, Maharashtra, Maahishik, Kalinga and Aamir. These are the Janpadas where Shabar live.'

'Janpadas situated in the west of Bharatvarsha are Suryarak, Kaalibala, Durg, Kaha, Pulind, Toshal and Koshal etc. Bharatvarsha is the only country in the whole world where all the four Yugas- Satya, Treta, Dwapar, and Kali occur in a cyclic way. Bharatvarsha is the root of all forms of divinity where deities reside and almighty God takes incarnation.'

7.9.1.4Tortoise Incarnation

Kraustuki asked Markandeya- 'O lord! How does Shri Hari live in the form of a tortoise?'

Markandeya replied- 'Shri Hari in the form of a tortoise sits facing east. States situated in the central portion of his body are Vedi, Madra, Maandavya, Shaalva, Khaasa, Saraswat, Matsya etc. States which are situated in the mouth of the tortoise are Vrishadhwaj, Anjan, Kasha, Magadh, Praagjyotish, Mithila, Koshal etc. In the right foot of the tortoise are situated states like Kalinga, Banga etc. Vindhya Mountain is also situated in the right foot. States which are situated in the tail of the tortoise are Manimegha, Kshuradri, Khanj, Konkan, Panchmad, Vaman, Sharkar, Chulik, Ashwakesha etc. Mandakya, Chandarwar, Ashwa, Kaland, Ghor, Ghuratwadi are the states that are situated in the left foot of the tortoise. Janpadas like Kailash, Himalaya, Kraunch, Kaikaya, Takshashila, Gandhar, Kharas, Yaudheya and Rajanya etc. are situated in the left side of the tortoise's abdomen.'

Narayana in the form of tortoise is that inconceivable soul in which reside all the lords of deities and constellations.

7.9.1.5The Descriptions of Bhadrashva

Markandeya says- 'Bhadraashva Varsh is situated towards the east of the great mountain Devakut. Five more mountains are situated within its area- Kauranj, Shwetaparna, Neela, Shaiwaal and Parnashaalagra. Bhadraashva consists of thousands of Janpadas. Numerous rivers like Sita, Shankhavali, Bhadra and Chakravarta flows there. People living in Bhadraashva Varsh are full of radiance and they live for 1000 years. Narayana dwells in Bhadraashva in his incarnation of Hayagreev.'

'Now I am going to tell about Ketumaal Varsh which has seven mountains within its area- Vishaal, Kambal, Krishna, Jayant, Hariparvat, Vishoka, and Vardhamaan. There are thousands of smaller hills apart from these seven major mountains where people live. The names of the rivers flowing at Ketumaal Varsh are Vankshuyama, Swakambha, Amogha, Kamini, Shyama etc. Narayana dwells in Ketumaal Varsh in his incarnation of a boar (Varaha).'

'Now listen about Uttarkurudesha. There are thousands of trees, which are fruit laden in all the seasons. Apparels are made from the bark of the trees and ornaments from its fruits. After being degraded, the residents of Devaloka take birth here. Uttarkuru has two mountains- Chandrakant and Suryakant. The river-Bhadrasoma flows between these two mountains. Narayana in his incarnation of Matsya (fish) lives at Uttarkuru. Chandradweep and Bhadradweep are the two famous islands situated at Uttarkuru.'

7.9.1.6The Description of Kimpurush-Varsha

Markandeya says- 'The people residing in Kimpurush Varsh enjoy a long life. They live for 10,000 years. They are never bothered by any kind of disease or sorrow. Just behind Kimpurush Varsh is situated Hari Varsh. The residents of Hari Varsh enjoy an eternally youthful life because of the sugarcane juice they intake. Meru Varsh, which is situated near Hari Varsh, is also known as Ilavrit. It is devoid of the light of the Sun but gets sufficient light from the radiant Sumeru

Mountain. It is so bright that even the Sun gets overshadowed. People living in Meru Varsh enjoy a very long life for 30,000 years. Similarly people living in Ramyak Varsh sustain themselves by drinking fruit juice. They live for 10,000 years. Hiranyamay Varsh is situated towards the north of Ramyak Varsh where the river Hiranvati flows. The residents of Hiranyamay are powerful, rich and handsome in appearance.

7.9.2 The Beginning of Swarochish Manavantar

This Section contains 6 sub-sections.

Conversation between the Brahmin and Varudhini:

Kraustuki asked Markandeya- 'O great sage! Now tell me something about Swarochish Manavantar?'

Markandeya replied- 'Once upon a time, there lived a Brahmin at the bank of river Varuna. One day, a guest arrived at his place. The Brahmin treated his guest with due respect. After formal introduction, the Brahmin became aware that his guest was not an ordinary person. He had travelled around the world with the help of some special mantras he knew and medicinal herbs, which he had in his possession. The Brahmin was quite impressed. He too wanted to see the whole earth. He requested his guest to give the mantra and the medicinal herb so that he could travel around the world just like him. The guest applied some medicinal solution on his legs. After this the Brahmin went to see the Himalaya Mountain. While wandering there, the solution, which had been applied on his legs, got washed away. As a result, he now became immobile. He started looking all around himself. He found numerous Apsaras entertaining the Kinnars, Gandharvas and deities. The Brahmin was very much pleased to see the happy atmosphere prevailing all around Himalaya. He thought of going back to his place but was unsuccessful, as the medicinal solution had been washed. He became very sad. An Apsara by the name of Varudhini saw him in a miserable condition. She became infatuated by him. When she went near him, he asked- 'Who are you? Who is your husband? What are you doing here?'

After this, he narrated his own story and said- 'I had come from Aruna nagar to see the Himalaya. But I am unable to return home as the medicinal solution, which was applied on my legs has been washed. Varudhini told the Brahmin that she was an Apsara. She also expressed her deep love towards the Brahmin. She requested the Brahmin to stay there and not to go back home. She assured him if he did, as per her instructions then he would enjoy an eternal youth. He would never become old. Varudhini forcibly tried to embrace the Brahmin. This made the Brahmin very angry.

He said- 'Varudhini! The sacred scriptures prohibit a Brahmin from indulging in sensual pleasures because it gives sorrow not only in this world but also after his death.' But Varudhini was not satisfied by his answers. She threatened to give up her life if the Brahmin did not marry her. The Brahmin did not agree. The

Brahmin purified himself by performing Aachaman and began worshipping Agni. He said- 'O Agni! You are the root cause of all Karmas. The deities bless us with rain only after you are pleased. O Agni! I need your blessings. I want to go back home.'

7.9.2.1Varudhini's Modesty Breached
Markandeya says- 'Agni became pleased by the Brahmin's devotion. Agni entered into his body. The Brahmin's body illuminated due to Agni's radiance. When Varudhini saw this, she was fascinated by the Brahmin's appearance. The Brahmin proceeded towards his home. Feeling helpless, Varudhini cursed her fate.'

Varudhini had once insulted a Gandharva named Kali sometime in the past. Chancing upon the opportunity, Kali went to Varudhini take his revenge. He had disguised himself as a Brahmin. When she saw him, she said- 'I need your protection if you heed to my request then you will certainly attain virtuosity. Kali did not want her to know about his real identity, so he replied- 'If you really want my protection, then you must have your eyes closed while having copulation.' Varudhini agreed.

7.9.2.2His Marriage with Manorama
In due course of time, Varudhini became pregnant. She gave birth to a child who was named Swarochi. The child was extra-ordinary. In a very short time, he became proficient in all the scriptures. One day, young Swarochi saw a terrified girl near the Mandaar Mountain. When the girl saw Swarochi, she pleaded for help. Swarochi assured her and asked about her identity. She said- 'My name is Manorama. Once I had made fun of a sage who was doing penance near the Kailash Mountain. At that time, two of my companions- Vibhaavari and Kalavati were also present with me. The sage cursed all three of us. Vibhaavari and Kalavati got inflicted with leprosy and tuberculosis due to his curse. Even I was not spared. I am being chased by a ferocious demon since then. I need your protection from that demon. I am giving you this very powerful weapon with which you can successfully kill the demon.'

Swarochi took the weapon. During the conversation between Swarochi and Manorama, a demon arrived just then. The demon wanted to devour Manorama. Swarochi was confused, as he did not want the sage's curse to go futile. He allowed the demon to get hold of Manorama, who then started wailing. Hearing her wail, Swarochi thought of killing the demon. Becoming afraid, the demon released Manorama from his clutches and pleaded Swarochi to spare his life. He then narrated his own story. He said- 'You have rescued me from sage Brahmamitra's curse. Actually, my name is Indivaraaksha. I had requested Brahmamitra to teach him the nuances of Ayurveda, which he refused. I decided to learn Ayurveda while sage Brahmamitra taught his disciples by hiding myself. One day, the sage came to know of this. He cursed me to become a demon. I begged for his forgiveness. He said- 'Whatever I have said will definitely come true. You will certainly become a demon. After

becoming a demon, you will try to devour your own daughter but would regain your original form of Gandharva due to the touch of Astraanal weapon with which you would be attacked. O great soul! Since you have liberated me from the curse, therefore, I hand over this girl to you. Accept her as your wife. I will also bestow the knowledge of Ayurveda, which I had learnt from sage Brahmamitra.'

Manorama requested Swarochi to cure her companions from the diseases they were suffering from. Swarochi assured Manorama that he would certainly cure her companions with the help of Ayurveda, which the demon had taught him. Both Swarochi and Manorama got married. Swarochi then went to her companions and cured them from their diseases.

7.9.2.3Swarochi's Other Marriages

Markandeya says- 'After getting cured from their respective diseases, both the companions of Manorama expressed their gratitude to Swarochi. Swarochi married both Vibhaavari as well as Kalavati. To show her gratitude, Vibhaavari taught Swarochi, a special art that helped him to understand the language of all the living creatures. Kalavati on the other hand while narrating her tale, said- 'A demon named Ali had asked my hand in marriage from my father but my father refused. The demon got angry and killed my father. I wanted to commit suicide but Sati; the wife of Shambhu prevented me from doing so by saying- ' You would be fortunate to become a wife of great soul Swarochi.'

7.9.2.4Swarochi's Reproachment

Markandeya says- After getting married, Swarochi started living happily along with all his three wives at Malaya Mountain. One day, impressed by the mutual love, Swarochi and his wives had for each other, a female ruddy goose told another one- 'Very rarely are found such couples who have love for each other.' But the other female ruddy goose did not agree. She replied- 'You are wrong. Swarochi is not a blessed man. Actually, he deceives all of his three wives. Even his love for all the three wives is varied. When one wife is desirous of his love, he embraces the other wife. So where is the question of having mutual love for one another? In comparison, my husband and I are blessed because we have mutual love and respect for each other.'

Swarochi, who was listening to their conversation, realised how true the ruddy goose was. But still, he did not change his ways and continued to live with his wives for 100 years.

One day while wandering, Swarochi saw a deer surrounded by a herd of doe. One of the doe on having a desire to copulate with the deer started sniffing him in anticipation. But the deer became angry and said- 'Do you think I am as shameless as Swarochi? A man, who is sought by numerous beauties, his condition becomes laughable. Not only does the daily routine of such a man gets disturbed, but also his behaviour is never fair towards his wives.'

7.9.2.5The Origin of Swarochish Manu

Markandeya says- 'Swarochi became very sad after hearing the deer's utterances. He realised how lowly and mean he had become. He decided to renounce life after abandoning his wives. But this did not happen because as soon as he met them, he forgot everything about renunciation. He continued to live with his wives. In due course of time, Swarochi begot three sons- Vijay, Merunand and Prabhaav. Swarochi ordered the construction of three cities for his sons, which he donated to each of them. The city situated towards the east was given to Vijay while the city situated towards the north named Nandvati was given to Merunand. The city named Taal, which was situated in the south, was given to Prabhaav.

Swarochi then lived happily with his wives. One day, Swarochi had gone for hunting. He saw a wild boar and adjusted his arrow on the bowstring to kill it. Just then, a doe arrived and requested him to kill her instead of killing that boar. She said- 'Kill me with your arrow so that I get liberated from my sorrows. I don't want to live because I have become infatuated with such a 'person' whose heart lies somewhere else. My aspirations remain unfulfilled. So death is my only refuge.'

Swarochi was very much amazed. He asked- 'Who is that fellow?' The doe replied- 'It is nobody than you.' Swarochi was puzzled, 'How can this be? I am a man whereas you are an animal.' The doe then requested Swarochi to embrace her, which Swarochi agreed to do. As soon as Swarochi embraced that doe, she got transformed into a beautiful lady. Swarochi was very much astonished but the doe said that- 'Don't get puzzled. I am the presiding deity of this forest. I have come to seek your help on the request of the deities. It is your duty to help me in giving birth to a son named Manu. Swarochi married her and in course of time, she gave birth to a son. The whole atmosphere became joyous and happy at the birth of that child. Gandharvas started singing songs and the Apsaras danced. The deities showered flowers from heaven. The child was so radiant that all the four directions became illuminated by his brilliance. Swarochi named this child as Dyutimaan. This child was later on also known as Swarochish, the son of Swarochi.

One day, while wandering, Swarochi saw a swan who was telling his wife- 'Now, we have become old, so what is the use of remaining attached to each other. Its time, we must seriously start thinking of renouncing life.' But his wife said- 'This world is meant for enjoying sensual pleasures. Even the Brahmins perform Yagyas with that purpose in their mind. All the virtuous people indulge in virtuous activities with the sole desire of experiencing the pleasures of life. How come the idea of renunciation has entered your mind?' The swan replied- 'One who is not attracted towards sensual pleasures is totally devoted to God. One who is attached by worldly matters can never reach God. Have you not seen the state of Swarochi? How can he be liberated from the sorrows of the world if he is not even willing to shun the attachments? I am not like Swarochi. I know that after enjoying a fully satisfied life, this is the time to renounce everything.' After

hearing this, Swarochi was very much ashamed of himself. He decided to do penance. His wives also accompanied him. All of them ultimately went to heaven by the virtue of their penance.

7.9.2.6Swarochish Manavantar

Markandeya says- 'During this Swarochish Manavantar, Indra was famously known as Vipaschit. The other deities were known as Paaraavat and Tushit. The names of the Saptarishis who lived during this Manavantar were Urja, Stamb, Pran, Dutt, Ali, Rishabh, Nischar and Arvaveera. Swarochish Manu had seven sons who were very mighty and brave. Chaitra and Kimpurush were two of them. The descendants of Swarochish ruled the earth till the end of this Manavantar.

Kraustuki asked- 'O lord! Tell me about the treasures of this world.'

Markandeya replied- 'Goddess Lakshmi is the presiding deity of learning (Vidya) called Padmini. After getting perfection in this Vidya, a man becomes the master of eight types of treasures- Padma, Mahapadma, Makar, Kacchupp, Mukunda, Nandak, Neel and Shankh. The treasure called Padma is pure in nature. A man who becomes the master of this treasure mainly deals in things like gold and silver etc. Not only he, but also his descendants derive benefits from this particular treasure. A person who is the master of Mahapadma deals in things like pearls, corals etc. This particular treasure does not abandon a man till his seventh generation. The treasure called Makar is Taamasik in nature. A man who is the master of this particular treasure is basically Taamasik by nature. Such a man has mastery in handling over various weapons like swords, bows and arrows etc. This particular wealth remains with a man only for one generation. The treasure called Kacchupp is also Taamasik in nature. A master of this particular treasure enjoys all the pleasure of this world and he does not trust any person easily. This treasure also remains with a man only for one generation. The treasure called Mukunda comprises of Rajas quality. A master of this treasure becomes proficient in four types of musical instruments like Veena, Venu, Mridang etc. Such a man earns lot of money by exhibiting his art. The treasure called Nandak is a combination of Rajas and Taamas qualities. A man who gets influences by this treasure becomes immobile. Such a man deals in things like metals, jewels, cereals etc. The master of this treasure is very benevolent and kind hearted. This particular treasure remains with a man till the seventh generation. The treasure called Neel is also a combination of Rajas and Satva qualities. A master of this treasure deals in things like clothes, cotton, pearls, fruits, flowers and things made from wood. This particular treasure remains with a man till three generations. A possessor of this treasure is a great social worker and constructs bridge, ponds etc. The treasure called Shankh comprises of Rajas and Taamas qualities. Only one person can master this particular treasure. Such a man enjoys good food and is fond of wearing expensive clothes. Normally, this type of man does not give shelter to other people and is constantly thinking of his own betterment. '

7.9.3 Auttam Manavantar Begins

This Section contains 5 sub-sections:

7.9.3.1King Uttam Abandons his Wife

Kraustuki says- 'O lord! Now tell me about the Auttam Manavantar.'

Markandeya replied- 'Uttanpada and Suruchi had a son named Uttam. Uttam was married to Bahula. Bahula did not love Uttam and always showed disrespect towards him. One day, while both of them were sitting in the court, watching the proceedings, Uttam offered a betel leaf to Bahula which she refused, King Uttam felt dishonoured. He ordered his attendant to abandon the queen in the forest. Bahula too was very happy, thinking that now she will not have to be in the company of Uttam. This way, Bahula was taken to the forest.

One day, a sad Brahmin came to Uttam and said- 'O king! Somebody has abducted my wife. I need your help in finding out my lost wife. Uttam asked the Brahmin about the nature, physical construction and about the age of his wife. The Brahmin revealed all the facts related with his wife. The king was not impressed. The facts, which the Brahmin had furnished, went to prove that his wife was not a chaste lady. The king expressed his view about his wife in so many words. He said- 'What is the use of having such a wicked wife? Forget about her. I will give you another one with all the good qualities.' The Brahmin replied- 'O king! It is one's duty to protect one's wife no matter how wicked she may be. By protecting your wife, your children also get protected. A man who does not protect his wife, has a son of hybrid class. His ancestors are degraded from the heaven because of such type of sons. I am not able to perform my religious obligations because of the absence of my wife. O king! Please help me.'

While searching the Brahmin's wife, King Uttam saw a sage at a secluded place. When the sage saw King Uttam, he wanted to offer some Ardhya (some type of offering) to him, which his disciples prohibited him from doing. Then, the sage changed his mind and offered his seat to the king. The king asked about the reason why he changed his mind of offering the Ardhya. The sage replied- 'Though you are the descendant of Swayambhu Manu, but since you have committed a grave sin by abandoning your wife, I decided that you are not fit to be offered the Ardhya. No matter how mean your wife is, it is your duty to protect her at all costs.' King Uttam was very ashamed of himself. He asked the sage about the whereabouts of the Brahmin's wife. The sage replied- 'His wife has been abducted by the demon, Balaak- the son of Adri. He has kept her in the forest called Utpalaavat. Go and help the Brahmin to meet his wife so that he doesn't commit a grave sin like you.

7.9.3.2Brahmin’s Wife Returns Home

Markandeya says- 'When King Uttam reached Utpalaavat forest, he saw a woman eating a Shriphal fruit. The king asked that woman whether she was the

wife of that Brahmin- Susharma. The woman replied in the affirmative and said- 'The demon abducted me while I was sleeping. Since that day, he has kept me here. I am very afraid of that demon.' The king then asked the woman about the demon's whereabouts. The woman pointed towards the direction of the demon's path. The king went in that direction.

When the demon saw the king approaching him, he bowed down in reverence and said- 'O king! What can I do for you?' The king asked- 'Why have you abducted the wife of this Brahmin.' The demon replied- 'I am not the demon who devours human beings. I devour their 'flaws'. I have many beautiful wives. So where is the need of aspiring for another woman? Actually, the Brahmin is a very learned man and has mastered the mantras. By chanting Rakshodna mantras during oblations, he has increased my hunger by making incantations. Therefore, I have abducted his wife to prevent him from accomplishing any Yagya.'

The king became very sad. He thought- 'What a grave sin I have committed by abandoning my wife! Earlier, that sage too did not find me fit for giving Ardhya. Now, this demon is also aware of the importance of one's wife in religious ceremonies. How cruel I have been to my wife.' The demon told the king- 'O king! What should I do for you?' The king replied- 'Devour the flaws of this woman so that she becomes humble. After that, carry her back home. The demon acted as per the instructions of King Uttam. As a result, the Brahmin's wife became very humble. She said to the king- 'It seems, there is no fault of this demon. Perhaps, I must have caused separation between a husband and wife, in my previous life and for that very reason, I was forced to suffer this separation with my husband in this present life. The demon said- 'O king! What else do you want from me? The king said- 'You must be present before me whenever I remember you.' The demon agreed. He carried the Brahmin's wife to her home.

7.9.3.3The Sage and King Uttam

Markandeya says- 'King Uttam wondered as to what should he do to get liberated from the sins of abandoning his wife. He requested the sage to help him in this regard. The sage informed the king that his wife was living at Ranatal. The king of the serpents- Kapotak is looking after her. Kapotak has a daughter named Nanda. Being concerned about her mother's future, Nanda had hidden your wife. The sage became very furious and cursed her. As a result, she became dumb. Uttam, your wife was always a chaste woman. It was only due to evil influences of the planets that she was not paying adequate attention to you. Now, you should go and take her back to your home. Uttam returned back to his palace.'

7.9.3.4The Birth of Auttam Manu

Markandeya says- 'Uttam met the Brahmin and told him that now as he had reunited with his wife, it was now his turn to help him (king) to re-unite with his wife. The Brahmin assured Uttam that he would perform a Yagya named

Mitravinda, which would help him to achieve his goal. He requested Uttam to bring his wife so that the Yagya could be performed. Uttam remembered Nisachar, a demon and requested him to bring his wife. Nisachar went to Pataal loka and brought his wife. The queen was very happy to see her husband once again. She requested him to cure Nanda who had become dumb for no fault of hers. Saraswat Japa was chanted to cure Nanda. When Nanda regained her voice, she came to the oblation site and after embracing the queen, blessed her by saying that she would become a proud mother of a very famous son named Manu. After that, she went back to Pataal loka. In due course of time, the queen gave birth to a son who was named Auttam by the sages. '

7.9.3.5Auttam Manavantar

Markandeya says- 'O sage! The following Ganas who reigned during Auttam Manavantar are very famous. They are the first Gana- Swadhama. The second Gana- Satya was related with the deities. The third Gana was Shiva, the fourth was named Pratardan and the fifth Gana was Vashvarti. Each of the Ganas are the master of twelve deities. Indra by the name of Sushaanti rules all the three worlds by the virtue of accomplishing one hundred Ashwamedha Yagyas. He along with Shiva and Satya etc. bestows peace to the world. The descendants of Auttam ruled the whole earth for the full period of Auttam Manavantar. The Saptarishis during this Auttam Manavantar were the sons of sage Mahatapa. The description of this third Manavantar is now complete. Now I am going to tell you about the fourth Manavantar, which is also known as Taamas Manavantar. '

7.9.4 Tamas Manavantar

Markandeya says- 'There used to live a king named Swarashtra. The deity Surya had blessed him with a long life. The king had one hundred wives, but they were not as lucky as he was as far as enjoying a long life was concerned. One by one, all of them died. A king from the neighbouring state named Vimard defeated him in a battle. After being defeated, Swarashtra went at the bank of river Vitastaa and started doing penance.

One day, it rained heavily and the king was swept by the ferocious current. The drowning king saw a doe and held her tail to save his life. The doe told the king that she was aware about the lust of the king. She also told her that her pregnancy was causing hindrance in making love. The king was amazed. He asked as to how she could speak like a human being despite of being an animal. The doe replied that she was his most beloved queen Mahishi in her previous life. She had killed a pair of deer while they were making love. The doe had died but the deer survived. He had cursed her to become a doe in her next life. The deer also revealed to the queen that she would give birth to the mighty Lola. The same Lola would later on become famous as Manu after defeating his father's enemies. The king was very pleased at this. In due course of time, the doe gave birth to a son after which she went to the heaven. The sages named the son Taamas. When Taamas became young, he did penance to please Surya. Surya gave him many weapons by the help of which Taamas was able to defeat

all his enemies. He brought all the enemies in front of his father but Swarashtra forgave everybody. He gave his kingdom to Taamas.

Markandeya says- 'Taamas ruled over the whole earth. Four types of deities were famous during this Manavantar- Satya Gana, Sudhi Gana, Surup Gana and Hari Gana. Indra was known as Shikhi during this Manavantar. The names of these Saptarishis who lived during this Manavantar were Jyotirdharma, Prithu, Kaavya, Chaitra, Agni, Balak and Peevar. The sons of Taamas Manu were very mighty. Their names were Nar, Kshanti, Shant, Daant, Jahnu and Jangha etc.

7.9.5 Raivat Manavantar

Markandeya says- 'Now I am going to tell you about Raivat Manu. His father was Ritvaak. Raivat was born in Revati Nakshatra. Later on, he became infamous for his loose character. His father was very worried about him. Ritvaak asked sage Garg as to how such a mean child had been born to him. Sage Garg replied- 'The negative qualities of your son is due to his birth in Revati Nakshatra. Ritvaak became very furious with Revati Nakshatra and cursed it as a result of which, Revati Nakshatra fell down on Kumud Mountain.

All the four directions became illuminated and a reservoir was created. A girl manifested from that reservoir. A sage named Pramuchi brought that girl to his hermitage and named her as Revati. When the girl became young, the sage was very worried about her marriage. One day, Hutaashan revealed to him that she would get married to Durgam, the eldest son of Swayambhu Manu. One day Durgam arrived at Pramuchi's hermitage. He saw Revati and asked her- 'O beautiful lady! Can you tell me where sage Pramuchi is? I have come here to pay my obeisance to him. At that time, sage Pramuchi was busy performing his Yagya. Hearing his voice, he came out. Seeing Durgam at his hermitage, he instructed his disciple, Gautam to bring Ardhya for him. The sage said- 'Durgam is not only a king but also my son-in-law.' Durgam was very surprised at what sage Pramuchi had said. He asked sage Pramuchi as to how could he be his son-in-law and who was his wife? The sage replied- 'Your wife is none other than the girl whom you met sometime earlier. Her name is Revati. Then the sage narrated the whole story how sage Garg had prophesised about Revati's marriage with Durgam.' Durgam started contemplating on this peculiar situation.

Sage Pramuchi started to make arrangements for the marriage. When Revati saw the arrangements being made for her marriage, she requested him to get her married in Revati Nakshatra. Sage Pramuchi revealed to her that this particular Nakshatra did not exist in the sky any more. Revati then requested him to establish this Nakshatra in the sky. Sage Pramuchi re-established Revati Nakshatra in the sky by the help of his divine powers. Thus, Revati and Durgam got married. After getting married, Durgam requested the sage to bless him with a mighty son. Sage Pramuchi blessed him. After sometime, Revati gave birth to Raivat Manu. Raivat Manu was proficient in all the scriptures. The chief Ganas of Raivat Manavantar were Sumedha, Bhupati, Vaikunth and

Amitabhaichar. There were fourteen deities present in each of the Ganas. The presiding deity of these deities was Indra by the name of Vibhu. The Saptarishis present during this Manavantar were Hiranyaroma, Vedshri, Urdhvabaahu, Vedbaahu, Sudhaama, Mahamuni, Paryanya and Vashishta. Raivat Manu had four sons- Balabandhu, Mahaveerya, Suyastanya and Satyak.

7.9.6 Chakshush Manavantar

Chaakshush had manifested from the eye (Chakshu) of Lord Brahma in his previous birth. For this reason, he was known as Chaakshush. Chaakshush was born to Anmitra and Giribhadra. After taking birth, he was abducted by Jaathaarini and exchanged with the son of King Vikrant who was sleeping besides his mother. Being unaware of this event, Vikrant considered him as his own son and named him as Anand. When Anand grew up, once, his Guru instructed him to make salutations to his mother. Anand replied- "To whom should I make salutations? The one who has given birth to me or to the one who has brought me up and nurtured me? The Guru was surprised by his reply. He said- "O son! Haimini, the wife of Vikrant has given birth to you and so, she is your mother. But Anand replied back- "This woman is not my mother. I have taken birth from somebody else's womb. This woman is the mother of Chaitra. I am the son of Anmitra and Giribhadra. Jaathaarini had abducted me and brought me here. She had also carried Chaitra to Punarva's place and kept him over there. Jaathaarini had devoured the son of Punarva. Now tell me, who is my mother and to whom should I make salutations?" The Guru became confused, so were the king and the queen. Anand went to the forest and started doing penance. Prajapati became pleased by his tremendous penance and appeared before him. He said- "O son! What makes you undertake such a severe penance? Anand replied- "O lord! I am doing this penance with the purpose of becoming free from all the bondage of my Karma and to purify myself. Brahmaji said- "Only the mortal men are fit to become liberated because they are bound by their Karmas but you being a virtuous person are not bound by your Karmas. With my blessings, you would become the sixth Manu. There is no need for you to do penance. Lord Brahma named him as Chaakshush. Later on, he became famous as Chaakshush Manu. When Chaakshush Manu attained marriageable age, he married Vidarbha, the daughter of Ugra. Markandeya says- "Aapya was the most prominent Gana of Chaakshush Manavantar. He was the master of eight deities. The second Gana was called Prasoot. He too was the master of eight deities. Similarly, there were two more Ganas- Bhatyakhya and Uthaga. Each of them was the master of eight deities. The presiding deity of these deities was Indra by the name of Manojav. The Saptarishis present during this Manavantar were Sumedha, Viraja, Havishmaan, Unnat, Madhu, Ati and Sahishnu. Chaakshush had many mighty sons like Uru, Kuru, Shatadryumna etc. Now I am going to tell you about the seventh Manu who was called Vaivasvat."

7.9.7 Vaivasvat Manavantar

The Birth of Ashwini Kumars and Revant:

Markandeya says- 'The Manu of Vaivasvat Manavantar was famously known as Vaivasvat as he was the son of Vivasvaan (Surya). Surya was married to Sangya- the daughter of Vishwakarma. Although, she had borne two sons (Vaivasvat and Yama) and a daughter (Yami) from Surya, yet the radiance of Surya was too much for her to bear. So, one day, she created a shadow identity of herself and requested it to act as if she was the real Sangya. She said to the shadow- 'As long as your identity remains unknown, I would not reveal myself.'

After this Sangya went back to her father's home and ultimately to Uttarkuru where she started doing penance in the guise of a mare. Surya on the other hand was not aware of Sangya's doings. In due course of time, the shadow of Sangya gave birth to many children. Though she loved her own children, she never had the same attitude towards the three sons of Sangya. Seeing her discriminatory attitude, Yama tried to kick her with his leg. The shadow of Sangya became furious. She cursed Yama's leg to get severed from his body. Yama became very scared. He went to his father Surya accompanied by Vaivasvat and Yami.

He told Surya- 'A mother can never curse her own child. So, this woman is certainly not our mother because she has cursed me.' Surya called the shadow of Sangya and asked about her true identity but Sangya's shadow kept mum. Seeing her quiet, Surya became very angry and he held her by her hair and was just about to curse her when, out of fear, she revealed the whole story. Surya went to the place of his father-in-law, Vishwakarma and asked about Sangya. Vishwakarma feigned ignorance. He said- 'She did come but she had returned to your place after staying here for a while.' Vishwakarma knew the reason why Sangya had abandoned her husband. So, he subdued the radiance of Surya.

7.9.8 The Sages of Saavarnik Manavantar

This Section contains 13 sub-sections.

Kraustuki says- 'O revered sage! You have already enlightened me by revealing the names of seven different Manus of each Manavantar. You have also told me about the deities, the kings and the sages who existed during each Manavantar. Now, I am curious to know about the seven Manus, the deities and the sages of this Kalpa.'

Markandeya says- 'Saavarni, the son of Sangya's shadow would be the eighth Manu. The Saptarishis of Saavarni Manavantar would be Rama, Vyasa, Gaalav, Diptimaan, Krip, Rishyashring and Drauni (Ashwatthama). The three main categories of deities existing during this Manavantar would be Sutapa, Amitabh and Mukhya. Each of them is the master of 20 Ganas. Among these, the Ganas- Prabhakar, Prabhas, Dathita, Dharma, Tejah, Rashmi and Vakratu come under the authority of the deity, Sutapa. Similarly, the deity Amitabh is the master of the Ganas like Prabhu, Vibhu and Vibhaas etc. The deity Mukhya is the lord of Ganas like Dama, Daant, Rit, Soma and Vint. All of them are the offspring of sage Kashyap. They will become famous as the deities of Saavarni Manavantar.

Bali, the son of Virochan would hold the post of Indra during this Manavantar. Virja, Arvaveera, Nirmoha, Satyavaak, Kriti and Vishnu will be the sons of Saavarni Manu.'

7.9.8.1Killing of Madhu Kaitabha

Markandeya says- 'King Surath was the descendant of Chaitra. He was defeated in the battle against King Kolvidhvansi. All his wealth was deceitfully taken over by his cunning ministers. King Surath fled to the forest to save his life where he met a sage named Medha. He stayed with him at his hermitage but after a while, the thought of his lost kingdom began to torment him. One day, while he was roaming near the hermitage, he met a Vaishya named Samadhi. Samadhi narrated his woeful story as to how his sons had driven him out of his home after taking all his wealth. But inspite of this, his love for them remained intact. Both Surath and Samadhi went to sage Medha and told him that- 'Inspite of our miserable condition, we are unable to understand why we still have affection and love for our near and dear ones even though they have cheated us.' Sage Medha replied- 'O king! Due to the illusions of this world, human beings are deeply influenced by attachments. So, there is nothing to be amazed. Goddess Mahamaaya influences the mind of each human being. She does not spare even the most learned one. When she becomes pleased, she bestows liberation.' The king asked- 'Who is this Mahamaaya? Please tell us about her.'

Sage Medha then told them about Mahamaaya- 'O king! Goddess Mahamaaya is beyond the reach of origin and destruction. When the whole earth was submerged in water at the end of the Kalpa, Lord Vishnu took refuge of Yoganidra. While He was sleeping, two demons, Madhu and Kaitabh manifested from the wax of his ears. The demons wanted to attack Brahma. Lord Brahma got scared and sought help from Goddess Nidra. She manifested from the body of Lord Vishnu and appeared before Lord Brahma. Lord Vishnu woke up from his sleep. He saw that the demons were trying to kill Lord Brahma. He fought with both the demons for 5,000 years. Goddess Mahamaaya influenced the demons' minds as a result of which, they asked some boons from Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu granted the boons to them and said- 'Both of you will get killed by me.' The demons said- 'We are ready to get killed on the condition that you kill us only in such a place where there is no water.' As the whole earth was submerged in water, so the demons thought that Lord Vishnu would not be able to get a base to kill them. But Lord Vishnu severed their heads after making them sit on His thighs.

7.9.8.2The Destruction of Mahishasura’s Army

Markandeya says- 'During ancient times, the deities and the demons fought a fierce battle which lasted for a hundred years. The deities were defeated in this battle. Mahishasura drove out the deities from heaven and ascended the throne of Indra. The defeated deities went to seek the help of Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Mahadev. They narrated their woeful tale to all the three deities. Brahma, Vishnu and Mahadev became furious at the demons' cruelty. A powerful effulgence appeared from the mouth of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahadev. Similar

effulgence appeared from the bodies of all the deities. The super effulgence was created from the unison of all these effulgence and a Goddess manifested from it. The deities were very pleased. All the deities presented their weapons to the Goddess. After this, they hailed her name in a loud voice by chanting- 'Victory be to her.' The Goddess laughed loudly. Her laughter shook the whole earth violently.

When Mahishasura heard her laughter, he proceeded towards her accompanied by a huge army. When he reached there, he was amazed at the appearance of the goddess. He attacked her with his army, which boasted of mighty warriors like Chaamar, Chikshur, Udagra, Asilom, Mahaahanu, Vaashkal, Parivaarit, Vidaal and Kaal. These demons had dangerous weapons like Tomar, Shakti, axe, mace etc. One by one, the Goddess destroyed all the demons' weapons and launched an attack on them. The deep exhalations made during the battle resulted into the creation of numerous Ganas. These Ganas joined the Goddess in the battle. Ultimately, the Goddess succeeded in killing all the demons.

The battlefield was covered by demons' corpses as well as carcasses of elephants and horses. The deities were pleased by the outcome of this battle.

7.9.8.3The Deities Eulogize Goddess Bhagwati
Markandeya says- 'After the killing of Mahishasura, all the deities including Indra eulogised Goddess Bhagwati and said- 'We make salutations to her who has manifested herself as a result of the unison of the powers of all the deities, one who is revered by all the deities and the sages. May she bless us. We make salutations to that Goddess whose powers are indescribable even by Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. O goddess! Please nurture the whole world with your love and care. We find ourselves incapable of describing your grandeur and magnificence.'

Goddess Bhagwati became very pleased with their devotion and asked them to demand any boon. But the deities replied- 'O goddess! By killing Mahishasura, you have already fulfilled our aspirations. If you really want to bless us, then please appear before us at the time of our need. The goddess blessed them by saying- 'So be it'.

Markandeya says- 'Now, I am going to tell you how Goddess Bhagwati protected the deities by killing the demons- Shumbh and Nishumbh.'

7.9.8.4Goddess Parvati and Shumbh’s Messenger
Markandeya says- 'During ancient times, the demons- Shumbh and Nishumbh had captured all the three worlds after defeating the deities. The deities went to Goddess Parvati and eulogised her by saying- 'O goddess! You had promised us that you would come to our help at the time of our need. The time has arrived.'

As the deities were busy eulogising Goddess Parvati, she was preparing to go for her bath. She came near the deities and asked them as to who were they

eulogising. Suddenly, a divine entity manifested from her body and answered on behalf of the deities- 'These deities are eulogising me.' This divine entity was none other than Goddess Shivaa. As Shivaa had manifested from the cell (Koshika) of Parvati's body, she was also known as Kaushiki. Kaushiki possessed divine beauty. The demons, Chand and Mund happened to see her.

Both of them went to Shumbh and described to him about Kaushiki's beauty. Shumbh wanted to marry her. He sent a messenger named Sugreev to Kaushiki to inform her about his intentions. Sugreev went to Kaushiki and said- 'You are so beautiful. You are fit to marry a mighty demon king like Shumbh who rules over all the three worlds.'

The goddess laughed and said- 'O messenger! I am ready to marry Shumbh or Nishumbh because I know they are very powerful but there is one problem. As I have taken a vow that I would marry only such a person who defeats me in a battle.' The messenger replied- 'O beautiful lady! How can you fight the mighty Shumbh who has defeated even the deities and who is the master of all the three worlds?' Sugreev made persistent requests but the goddess refused to go along with him. She instructed him to inform Shumbh and Nishumbh about her vow.

7.9.8.5Killing of Dhumralochan

Markandeya says- 'Sugreev went back to Shumbh and narrated the whole story. Shumbh became very furious and instructed Dhumralochan to bring her by force. Dhumralochan went to Goddess Bhagwati accompanied by 60,000 demons. Initially, he requested her to come along with him. He also threatened to take her forcibly if she did not accept her proposal. Goddess Bhagwati refused to go along with him. Dhumralochan angrily ran towards her. The Goddess made a loud roar as a result of which, Dhumralochan's body was reduced to ashes. After his death, Dhumralochan's army attacked Goddess Bhagwati. The mount of the Goddess- Simha killed all the demons. When Shumbh got the news of Dhumralochan's death, his anger knew no bounds. He instructed Chand and Mund to go and bring Goddess Bhagwati after capturing her.

7.9.8.6Killing of Chand and Mund

Chand and Mund proceeded with a huge army. At that time, Goddess Bhagwati had positioned herself at the peak of Himachal Mountain. She was mounted on the back of Simha and was smiling sweetly. Chand and Mund tried to enslave her but suddenly, Goddess Kali appeared from her mouth and ferociously attacked the demons. She devoured some of them and killed the rest. After seeing his huge army vanquished, Chand angrily ran towards Goddess Kali. Mund attacked her with a range of arrows, which infuriated Goddess Kali and she pulled Chand by his hair and severed his head by a sword. Seeing him fall to the ground, Mund ran towards Goddess Kali but even he was killed. The rest of the army retreated. After killing Chand and Mund, Goddess Kali told Goddess Bhagwati- 'I have done my duty. I have killed Chand and Mund. Now you should

do the same by killing Shumbh and Nishumbh.' Goddess Bhagwati replied- 'Since you have killed the demons, Chand and Mund from now onwards, you will also become famous as Chandika.'

7.9.8.7Killing of Raktabeej
Markandeya says- 'When Shumbh got the news of Chand and Mund' s death, he became very furious. He proceeded to fight Goddess Bhagwati accompanied by numerous mighty warriors like Udayudh, Kambu, Kotiveerya, Dhumravanshajaat, Kaalak, Kaalkeya etc. When Goddess Chandika saw them coming, she made a loud sound by pulling the bowstring. The demons came near and surrounded Goddess Chandika and Goddess Bhagwati from all the sides. Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu became anxious. They created divine entities with the help of effulgence emanating from their bodies. These divine entities resembled Goddess Chandika. They instructed these divine entities to kill all the demons. Goddess Chandika requested Lord Shiva to approach Shumbh and Nishumbh as her messenger and inform him that they should either take refuge in the Paatal loka or be ready to die. Lord Mahadev went to the place where Katyayani was fighting the demons. The demons attacked her with different weapons but Chandika gave them a befitting reply. Unable to face the assault of the goddesses, the demons started fleeing. Seeing this, Raktabeej came forward to fight. Raktabeej was blessed with a boon that was if a single drop of his blood fell on the ground, this drop would create another form of his. This way, in a very short time, thousands of Raktabeejas covered the battlefield. The deities became afraid.

Seeing the frightened deities, Bhagwati said to Kali- 'O Chamunda! Open your mouth and drink each drop of blood coming out from the injuries of Raktabeej.' After saying this, Goddess Bhagwati attacked Raktabeej with her trident. Goddess Kali drank all the blood coming out from his wound. At last, Raktabeej was killed. The deities were pleased. Goddess Kali started to dance with ferocity due to the intoxication caused by drinking of the blood.

7.9.8.8Killing of Nishumbh
Markandeya says- 'When Shumbh and Nishumbh heard about Raktabeej's death, they were infuriated. Nishumbh attacked the goddess with a huge army. Shumbh attacked from the other side. In the fierce battle, Goddess Bhagwati broke the sword as well as the shield of Nishumbh. Nishumbh then attacked Goddess Bhagwati with his weapon- Shakti. Goddess Bhagwati broke it with her Chakra. At last, she attacked him with her arrows at him and as a result, Nishumbh got injured and fell. '

When Shumbh saw Nishumbh, injured and unconscious, he ran towards Goddess Bhagwati to kill her. Goddess Bhagwati blew her conch and made a thunderous noise by pulling the bowstring. Shumbh released the dangerous weapon- Ugradipti in the direction of Goddess Bhagwati. But her weapon Maholkanaamni destroyed it. Shumbh thundered loudly and attacked Goddess Bhagwati with a volley of arrows but none could cause any harm to her. Finally,

Goddess Bhagwati attacked Shumbh with her trident. Shumbh fell down unconscious. After sometime, he regained his consciousness and attacked Goddess Bhagwati with his arrows. But she destroyed all the arrows. In the meantime, Nishumbh had regained his consciousness. He got up and attacked Goddess Bhagwati with his trident. In the end, Goddess Bhagwati killed Nishumbh by piercing her trident in his heart. As Nishumbh was dying, an another demon manifested from his body. Even he was killed by her. Her mount Simha devoured all the dead demons.

7.9.8.9Killing of Shumbh

Markandeya says- 'Shumbh became angry at the death of his brother-Nishumbh. He furiously told the goddess- 'O wicked lady! Do not be proud of your strength borrowed from others.' Goddess Bhagwati replied- 'O wicked demon! I am the only power of this whole universe. I am the origin of cause and effect. Look! All the divinities are entering into my body.'

The next moment, all the divine entities, which had earlier manifested from the bodies of the deities united with the goddess. Now, the goddess was alone. A tremendous battle was fought between Goddess Bhagwati and Shumbh. Ambika attacked him with numerous divine weapons. But, Shumbh neutralised her attack with his own weapons.

Shumbh covered the whole body of Goddess Bhagwati with his arrows. She broke his bow. After this, Shumbh attacked her with his weapon named Shakti, which was broken into pieces by her Chakra. Now, Shumbh took out his sword and attacked her with it. She broke his shield and sword with her arrows. Shumbh then attacked her with his mace. Even his mace was broken into pieces.

Shumbh had no more weapons left with him. He attacked the goddess on her breast with his clenched fist. She slapped him on his face because of which he fell down. The next moment, he got up and manifested himself in the sky. Now, a tremendous duel was fought between them in the sky.

In the end, she dashed him on the ground and pierced the trident in his heart. Shumbh was instantly killed. After the killing of Shumbh, all the deities became pleased. The Gandharvas and the deities rejoiced. The Apsaras danced. The whole atmosphere echoed with the sound- 'SHANTI SHANTI' (Let there be peace).

7.9.8.10 Devi Stotra

Markandeya says- After goddess Bhagwati had killed Shumbh, all the deities under the leadership of Indra and Agni started eulogising her- 'O Goddess! Be pleased up on us! Protect the whole world, as you are the goddess of this whole universe. You appear in the form of this earth- the base on which everything is situated. Your light illuminates all the living creatures. You are the only power through which creation, nurturing and annihilation takes place. You are the

Brahmani, Maheshwari and the Kaumari. We salute you because you have protected us from the terror of the demons. We need your protection from all the calamities of this world.'

Goddess Bhagwati was extremely pleased by their eulogy. She asked them for any wish. The deities said- 'O Akhileshwari! We need your protection. Clear all the obstacles from our path. Eliminate our enemies.'

Goddess Bhagwati replied- 'During Vaivasvat Manavantar, I will take incarnation from Yashoda's womb- the wife of Nand, to kill the demons Shumbh and Nishumbh. After that, I will kill the demon- Vaiprachit in my most aggressive form. One hundred years later, I will manifest myself and would be known as Satakshi because of my hundred eyes. My next incarnation would be known as Shakambhari because I would nurture the whole world during the period of drought. I will kill the demon Durgam during that drought period. I will kill the demon Arun- the tormentor of all the three worlds by appearing in the form of a bee. Due to this, I will be known as Bhramari. I will take incarnations every time the demons torment the world.

7.9.8.11 Goddess Bhagwati Blesses the Deities

Goddess Bhagwati says- I will clear all the obstacles from the path of such a man who worships me. A devotee who listens to the great tales of how I killed Mahishasura, Shumbh and Nishumbh, on the eighth, ninth and fourteenth days of any month, would be liberated from all sins and poverty. He would become free from fear. A devotee must listen to my divine tales during all the religious ceremonies like making sacrifice, worship and performing Yagya. By doing this, all his enemies will be eliminated. A man who remembers me when faced with dangerous situation remains protected by me.'

After blessing the deities, Goddess Bhagwati disappeared from their sight. All the demons, which had survived after the killings of Shumbh and Nishumbh, went to the nether world to save their lives.

7.9.8.12 Goddess Bhagwati Blesses Surath and the Vaishya

The sage says- 'O king! I have described in detail about the greatness of Goddess Bhagwati who is the creator of this universe. She is the one who bestows the knowledge of self to us. She is the Maya (illusion) by whom the whole world is influenced. You must take her refuge. You can achieve all the pleasures of this world, heaven, as well as liberation.'

King Surath and the Vaishya went to do their penance. While doing their penance, they chanted the mantras of Devi Sukta. They made an earthen idol of Bhagwati and worshipped it by offering flowers, Dhup etc. They did an austere penance for three years implying various modes of worship. Sometimes, they observed fast, the other time, they offered their own blood to please Goddess Bhagwati. At last, the goddess was pleased and appeared before them. She said- 'I am pleased with both of you. I will fulfil whatever you wish.'

King Surath sought her blessings in regaining his kingdom from the clutches of his enemies. He also requested her to bless him with an undivided kingdom in his next life. The Vaishya requested her to make him free from all kinds of attachments. Goddess Bhagwati said- 'O king! Very soon, you will be able to regain your whole kingdom from your enemies. In your next birth, you would be born as Saavarni Manu, the son of Surya. You will also attain self-knowledge and become free from all kinds of attachments.' After blessing both of them, Goddess Bhagwati disappeared.

7.9.8.13 Savarna Manavantar

Markandeya says- 'O great sage! Now I am going to tell you about the Manavantar of Saavarn, which will be the ninth Manavantar. Saavarn was the son of Daksha. During this Manavantar, there will be three prominent groups (Ganas) of deities. Each group would comprise of twelve deities. During this Manavantar, Indra would be known as Adbhut. The names of the Saptarishis of this Manavantar would be Medhatithi, Vasu, Satya, Jyotishmaan, Dyutimaan, Sabal and Hatyavaahan. Saavarn will have eight sons- Dhrishtketu, Barhaketu, Panchahasta, Niraamay, Prithushravah, Achishmaan, Bhuridruymna and Bhrihadmay.'

The tenth Manavantar will be named after the tenth Manasputra of Lord Brahma. During this Manavantar, the names of two prominent groups of deities will be Sukhasin and Niruddha. The total population during this Manavantar will be hundred people. The total number of deities during this Manavantar will also be of the same number. The name of Indra during this tenth Manavantar would be Shanti and the names of the Saptarishis during this tenth Manavantar would be Aapomurti, Havishmaan, Sukrit, Satya, Naabhaag, Apratim and Vashishta. The tenth Manu would have ten sons- Sukshetra, Uttamoja, Bhurishen, Veeryavaan, Shataanik, Vrishabh, Anmitra, Jayadrath, Bhuridruymna and Suparva.

The eleventh Manavantar will be named after Saavarn, the son of Dharma. During this Manavantar, there will be three prominent groups of deities- Vihangam, Kaamag and Nirmaanpati. Each group would comprise of 30 deities. Indra would be known by the name of Vrishakhya. The name of the Saptarishis of this Manavantar would be Havishmaan, Varishtha, Nischar, Anagh, Vishti, Agnidev etc. The eleventh Manu would have six sons- Sarvatrag, Susharma, Devaneek, Purudwaha, Hemdhanva and Dhridhayu.

The twelfth Manavantar will be named after Saavarn, the son of Rudra. The names of the five prominent groups of deities of this Manavantar will be Sudharma, Sumana, Harit, Rohit and Suvarn. Each group will comprise of ten deities. During this Manavantar, Indra would be known by the name of Kratadhaama. The names of the Saptarishis during this Manavantar would be Dyuti, Tapasvi, Sutava, Tapomurti, Taponidhi, Taporati and Tapodhiti. The Manu

of this Manavantar would have six sons- Devavaan, Upadev, Devashrestha, Vidurath, Mitravaan and Mitravinda.

Rauchya would be the Manu during the thirteen Manavantar. Three prominent groups of deities would be Sudharma, Sukarma and Susharma. During this Manavantar, Indra would be known by the name of Divaspati. The name of the Saptarishis of this Manavantar will be Dhritimaan, Avyay, Tatvadarshi, Nirutsuk, Nirmoha, Sutapa and Nishkamp. During this Manavantar, Manu would have eight sons- Chitrasen, Vichitra, Niyati, Nirbhay, Dhridh, Sunetra, Kshatrabuddhi and Suvrat.

7.9.9 Rauchya Manavantar

This Section contains 4 sub-sections.

7.9.9.1Birth of Rauchya Manu

Markandeya says- 'As soon as the ancestors departed, a beautiful Apsara came near Ruchi. Her name was Pramlocha. She said to him- 'O great sage! I have a daughter named Maalini. The name of my husband is Pushkar. I want to get her betrothed to you. Please accept her as your wife. In course of time, she would give birth to Manu.

Ruchi accepted her proposal. Ruchi married Maalini in the presence of sages. In course of time, Maalini gave birth to a son who was named Rauchya. Rauchya Manavantar was named after him.

7.9.9.2Ruchi Advised to get Married

Markandeya says- 'During ancient times, the ancestors of Ruchi were not pleased by his unmarried status. He was a sage of high degree and used to have food once a day. The ancestors asked him- 'O son! Why didn't you get married? Grihasthashram holds a very important place in the life of a man. It is only after paying his three debts (rina) that a man is entitled to become a householder. All your efforts in paying off your debts towards the deities and ancestors are useless unless you are married. Your aspirations of attaining the supreme abode would go in vain unless you have become a father.'

Ruchi replied- 'Getting married is the root cause of all sorrows. It also obstructs the upward spiritual movement of a man. That is why I am not having any interest in getting married. Having self control helps a man to attain salvation.'

The ancestors said- 'The path you have chosen would never lead you towards salvation. A man reaps the fruits of his Karmas committed in his previous lives in the form of happiness and sorrow. An intelligent man must act in such a manner that his soul remains aloof from his Karmas.'

Ruchi replied- 'The path of actions (Karma) has been described as an Avidya in the Vedas. Why are you pushing me towards that path?' The ancestors replied- 'It is true what you have said. But at the same time, it can be proved wrong by

one's Karmas because Karmas are the means by which a man attains self-knowledge. Your belief that your actions are purifying your soul is based on false notions. Actually, by not doing your Karma, you are only torturing your soul. Karma is very beneficial for a man's upliftment. So, you must get married to enjoy a blissful life.'

Ruchi replied- 'O great ancestors! Who will give his daughter to a poor and an old man like me?' The ancestors warned Ruchi that if he went against their wishes, he would face degradation in every sphere of his life. After saying this, the ancestors disappeared.

7.9.9.3Ruchi Eulogizes his Ancestors

Markandeya says- 'After the departure of his ancestors, Ruchi started wandering here and there in his restlessness. After sometime, when he regained his composure, he decided to do penance to please Lord Brahma. His penance continued for one hundred years. After the accomplishment of his penance, Lord Brahma appeared before him and asked what he desired. Ruchi expressed his desire of getting married as per the aspirations of his ancestors. Lord Brahma blessed him and also instructed Ruchi to eulogise his ancestors so that his wishes could be fulfilled.'

Ruchi eulogised his ancestors by chanting Stotras- 'I make salutations to my ancestors who preside over the ceremony of Shraadh, who are pacified even by the deities, by the chanting of Swaha, made during the ceremony of Shraadh. I make salutations to my ancestors who dwell in the space and in the heaven. May my ancestors accept the offerings, which I am making in the form of flowers, cereals, water, Dhup etc.'

7.9.9.4Ancestors Bless Ruchi

Markandeya says- 'Hardly had Ruchi accomplished his eulogy of the ancestors, a very bright effulgence appeared in front of him, who were in fact his ancestors. They said- 'Demand any boon.' Ruchi replied- 'Lord Brahma has instructed me to enhance the process of creation. So I need a wife for that purpose. The ancestors said- 'Here at this very place, you will find a very beautiful wife. She would give birth to Rauchya. You too would become very famous as Prajapati because of your numerous sons and you will attain salvation in the end.'

After blessing Ruchi, the ancestors departed for heaven.

7.9.10 The Beginning of Bhautya Manavantar

This Section contains 1 sub-section.

Markandeya says- 'Now I am going to tell you about the origin of Bhautya Manavantar. Sage Angira had a disciple named Bhuti. He was short tempered in nature and used to curse anybody at the earliest opportunity. Everybody

including the deities like Indra, Vayu, Surya etc. were scared of him. Nobody went against his wishes and followed his commands.'

Bhuti had no children and commenced a rigorous penance to achieve one. But still, his aspiration remained unfulfilled. He decided to quit doing penance. His brother named Suvarcha invited him to the Yagya he was performing. Bhuti left the hermitage after entrusting his disciple- Shanti to look after its affairs.

Shanti tried his best to perform his duties according to the instructions of his teacher- Bhuti. Yet, one day, the sacrificial fire got extinguished somehow. Shanti became scared at the prospect of facing his preceptor's wrath. He was certain of being cursed by Bhuti. Finding no other option, he went to Agni named Jaativeda and sought his help. He tried to please him by chanting Agni Stotra. He eulogised Agni in many ways. He said- 'O Agni! The first of all creations, I need your blessings. Without you, the Yagya cannot be performed. All the Vedas are full of praise for you. The deities as well as the demons try to pacify you by making offerings to you.'

The deity Agni became extremely pleased by Shanti's eulogy and appeared before him. He asked Shanti to express his desire. Shanti requested Agni to re-ignite the sacrificial fire, which had gone off, so that he does not have to face the wrath of his Guru. He then requested Agni to bless his Guru with a son having all the good qualities. Agni was very much pleased by Shanti's devotion towards his Guru. He said- 'Your Guru Bhuti would have a son named Bhautya after whom the Manavantar would be named.' After blessing him, Agni disappeared.

Shanti returned to his hermitage and was very pleased to see the sacrificial fire burning. In the meantime, his Guru Bhuti arrived. His Guru was very pleased with the sincerity of Shanti with which he performed his duties in his absence. Bhuti said- 'O son! I don't understand the reason why my heart is overwhelmed with love. Love is alien to my nature. If you are cognisant of the reason, please tell me.' Then Shanti narrated the whole story. Bhuti was very pleased by his devotion. He taught all the Vedas to Shanti.

In course of time, Bhautya was born to him. He was the Manu of the Bhautya Manavantar. During this Manavantar, there would be five prominent groups of deities- Chaakshush, Kanishth, Pavitra, Bhrajir and Dharavrit. During this Manavantar, Indra would be known as Shuchi. The names of the Saptarishis would be Agnigh, Agnibaahu, Suchi, Mukt, Maadhav, Shukra and Ajit. Bhautya Manu would have ten sons- Guh, Gambhir, Brahna, Bharat, Anugraha, Shrimaani, Prateer, Vishnu, Sankraman and Subal. A man who listens to the tales of all the fourteen Manvantaras is not only blessed but becomes liberated from all his sins.

7.9.10.1 Birth of Martandadev

Lord Brahma had created Daksha from the thumb of his right hand. Daksha's wife was created from the thumb of Brahma's left hand. Daksha had a daughter named Aditi. Maartandadev was the son of Aditi and his father was Kashyap.

Kraustuki asked- 'O lord! Tell me the reason why Vivasvaan Surya took birth as the son of Kashyap.'

Markandeya says- 'During the initial phase of creation, when nothing existed, except a large egg. Lord Brahma manifested inside that egg. Subsequently, he came out from that egg. At that time, a loud sound of OM came out from his mouth. From this sound of Omkar, were created Bhur, Bhuvah and in the end Swah. These three mystic words are the forms of Surya. After that, three more mystic words were created- Mahah, Jan and Tapah, each of the former word being grosser than the latter one. In the end, the word Satya was created, which was the grossest of all. These seven mystic words related with the Omkar illustrate the gross and the subtle forms of Vivasvaan.

7.10 Manifestation of the Sun God (Aditya) and the Vedas

This chapter contains 6 sections.

Markandeya says- 'After Brahma came out from that egg, Rigveda manifested from his first mouth. From the mouth facing south, manifested the Yajurveda. After that, Samaveda manifested from his mouth facing west. In the end, Atharvaveda came out from the mouth facing north. The Rigveda symbolises the Rajo Guna while the Yajurveda symbolises the Satva Guna. Samaveda comprises of Tamo Guna whereas Atharvaveda is the mixture of Satva and Tamo Guna. The manifestation of the Vedas had illuminated the whole atmosphere. But the manifestation of Omkar overlapped their radiance and covered all the Vedas.

At last, the radiance of the Vedas got united with that of the Omkar. The Rigveda symbolises the form of Brahma during the period of creation while Yajurveda symbolises Lord Vishnu during the whole period of nurturing. Samaveda is symbolical of Rudra at the time of annihilation.

7.10.1 Lord Brahma Eulogizes Surya

Markandeya says- 'In the beginning of the creation, Surya shed unbearable amount of heat. This made the process of creation very difficult. Lord Brahma became worried. He thought- 'Due to the extreme heat of the Sun, all the water on this earth is getting evaporated. If this continues to happen then how would the creatures survive?'

Lord Brahma eulogised Surya to please him. He said- 'I make salutations to Surya who is the object of contemplation of great sages, who is the source of all energy. O Surya! It is only because of you that I can create, nurture and annihilate. You are the protector of this universe created from the

Panchatatvas. Please subdue your radiance so that I can commence my creation.'

Vivasvaan Surya became very pleased by Brahma's eulogy and subdued his radiance. Thus, it became possible for Lord Brahma to begin his creation. He created the deities, demons, human beings, animals, vegetation etc. in the same way as he had done in earlier Kalpas.

7.10.2 Progeny of Kashyap Prajapati and Aditi's Eulogy of Divakar

Markandeya says- 'Lord Brahma, after having created the universe divided the earth into various islands. He also created the oceans and the mountains. Marichi, the son of Brahma was the father of Kashyap. Kashyap was married to the ten daughters of Daksha. He had numerous sons from them like the deities, the demons and many creatures like reptiles. Aditi was the mother of the deities, Diti of the demons, Danu of the Daanavas (monsters). Vinata gave birth to Garud and Arun. Ravasa was the mother of Yakshas and the Rakshasas, Kadru of the Nagas. Muni was the mother of Gandharvas. Krodha was the mother of Kulyaava Ganas, Rishta of Apsaras. Ira was the mother of the elephants and Taamra was the mother of Shyeni. Ila gave birth to all the vegetation while Pradha gave birth to the insects. The earth was inhabited with the progenies of Aditi's sons.

Lord Brahma had made the deities masters of all the three worlds. This decision of Brahma had made the Daityas, Daanavas and Rakshasas very angry. They got united and started causing obstacles in the path of the deities. A great battle was fought between the deities and the demons in which the deities were defeated. Aditi, the mother of the deities became very sad. She did a rigorous penance to please the Sun god. She observed fasts and eulogised the Sun god for most of her time. At last, the Sun god appeared before her but she could not bear his radiance which was so powerful that she could not even open her eyes. She requested him to subdue his power so that she could see him.

7.10.3 Aditi gives birth to Aditya

Markandeya says- 'After being pleased by the eulogy of Aditi, the Sun shed its radiance and became sombre. Now, Aditi could see him. She said- 'O lord! Be pleased upon me. The Daityas and the Daanavas have captured all the three worlds from my sons. I request you to take birth as my son and defeat the demons.'

The Sun god agreed to take birth as her son. In course of time, Aditi became pregnant. She engaged herself in religious activities so that she could become a mother of a virtuous child. Seeing his pregnant wife observing fasts, Kashyap became very angry. He said- 'It is not proper for a pregnant woman to observe fast as it may prove to be harmful to the foetus. Why are you trying to destroy it?' Aditi replied- 'I am not trying to destroy my foetus. After taking birth, our child will destroy our enemies.'

In her anger, Aditi released her foetus. Kashyap started chanting the mantras of Rigveda. In a very short time, her child came out from that foetus. A heavenly voice was heard which said- 'O sage! Since you have called this foetus, Maarit, therefore your son would be famously known as Maartand.' After the birth of Maartand, the morale of the deities was boosted up. Indra challenged the demons. A tremendous battle ensued between both the sides. Maartand glanced towards the demons as a result of which they were charred to death. The deities were pleased and eulogised Maartand. At last, the deities regained their territories they had lost to the demons.

7.10.4 Vishwakarma Eulogizes Aditya

Markandeya says- 'Vishwakarma had married his daughter Sangya to the Sun-god. But being unable to face the unbearable radiance of the Sun, she went to do penance after instructing her shadow to perform the duties of an ideal wife on her behalf. Ultimately, she returned back to her husband only after Vishwakarma had subdued the radiance of the Sun god. Vishwakarma then eulogised the Sun god by saying- I make salutations to the Sun god whose existence is beneficial for the whole universe. I make salutations to one whose own origin remains a mystery and who enables our eyes to see. I make salutations to the Sun god who destroys the darkness and who lightens up the whole world.'

7.10.5 Rajyavardan’s Subjects Eulogize Aditya for their King’s Long Life

Kraustuki says- 'O lord! Enlighten us on the greatness of Bhaskar.'

Markandeya replied- 'There was a king named Rajyavardhan. His subjects were very happy and satisfied under his rule. They were free from all the diseases. Rajyavardhan ruled for 7,000 long years. His wife was Maanini. One day, while Maanini was applying oil on his head, she saw a grey hair. She became very sad and started crying. A drop of tear fell on the king. He asked the queen as to why she was crying. The queen told him about the reason. The king laughingly said- 'I am fully satisfied by my rule of 7,000 years. The grey hair on my head is an indication that I must now abandon my worldly life and become a recluse. This would be more appropriate for me.'

When his subjects came to know about his decision, they became sad. But nothing could make the king change his mind. He decided to become a recluse after appointing his son as his successor. The king called the astrologers for consultation. The astrologers advised the king to change his mind. But Rajyavardhan did not listen to them.

At last, his subjects decided to eulogise the Sun god and demand a long life for their king. All of them started worshipping the Sun god. A Gandharva whose name was Sudama appeared before them and instructed them to go to a forest named GuhaVishaal and continue their penance. All of them went to the forest as per the instruction of the Gandharva. There was a beautiful temple of Lord Bhaskar in the forest. They worshipped Surya and eulogised him. Their worship

continued for three months after which the Sun god became pleased and appeared before them. Lord Bhaskar asked them to demand any boon. He said- 'O Brahmin! Demand anything you wish.' All of them said- 'O lord! If you are really pleased with us, then bless our King Rajyavardhan with a long life. Please bless him with an eternal youth and a life free from all the deities. We want our king to live for 10,000 years. The Sun god blessed them by saying- 'So be it'.

After receiving the boons, all of them came to the king's palace and narrated the whole story. The queen was very pleased but the king was worried. The queen was surprised at the king's sadness even after getting such good news. The king replied- 'What is the use of remaining alive for 10,000 years? You won't be alive then. Will I be able to enjoy my life in your absence? Will not the deaths of my sons, my grandsons and my near and dear ones make me sad? The boon of myself enjoying life for 10,000 years will actually prove to be a curse.'

The queen sadly said- 'Whatever you have said is true. I could not understand this fact because of my ignorance. Now, you must do your duty, as the boon of the Sun god is not going to go in vain. The king decided to go to the Mountain-Prabhriti and do penance. He wanted to receive a boon from Sun god, which enabled all his subjects and his relatives to remain alive as long as he lived. The queen also decided to move along with the king. Both of them did an austere penance. The Sun god appeared before them and blessed them. Thus, Rajyavardhan lived for 10,000 years along with his subjects.

7.10.6 Martandadev and his Descendants

Markandeya says- 'Maartandadev had a son named Manu. The seventh Manavantar in which we are living is named after him. Manu had many sons among whom Narishyant, Naabhaag, Prishadhna and Drisht were the rulers of different kingdoms. Manu had performed a special Yagya named Mitravarun with the desire of having more sons. But after the Yagya, a daughter was born to him and who was named Ila. Manu then requested Mitravarun to transform that girl into a boy, if he was really pleased with him. Both the deities blessed Manu and instantly that girl was transformed into a boy. He was named Sudryumna.

One day, Sudryumna had gone to the forest for hunting. Incidentally, because of the wrath of Goddess Parvati, he again got transformed into a lady. At that time, he was married to Buddh and a son named Pururava was born to them. Later on, he regained his body of the male. This time, he became the father of Utkal, Vinay and Gaya. All these three sons were very just rulers. Pururava was made the king of Pratisthanpur.

7.11Famous Mythological Tales

This chapter contains 10 sections.

7.11.1 King Prishadhna

King Prishadhna was the son of Manu. One day, he had gone to the forest on a hunting spree. He killed a cow by mistake. This cow belonged to an Agnihotri Brahmin who was performing a Yagya. The Brahmin became very furious and cursed Prishadhna to become a Shudra. King Prishadhna too became angry and he wanted to retaliate. He took some water in his hand and was just about to curse the Brahmin, just then the Brahmin's father Mauli arrived. He warned both of them against cursing each other. He said- 'Anger decreases the life span of a man. It also destroys the knowledge and makes a man, a destitute. An angry person can neither be virtuous nor he can accumulate wealth. Even if the king had killed the cow deliberately, he is worthy of being shown compassion. But if he has committed this sin out of his ignorance, then certainly, he is not fit to be cursed. Therefore, O son! Don't curse the king. The cow must have died because of her own past Karmas.'

King Prishadhna made salutations to the Agnihotri Brahmin and said in a loud voice- 'Be pleased on me. I did not kill the cow deliberately. It only happened by mistake. The Brahmin replied- 'O king! I have never spoken a lie in my life. Even my curse which I have given to you will not go in vain.' Sage Mauli took his son to his hermitage. In course of time, Prishadhna became a Shudra due to the curse.

7.11.2 Prince Nabhag

Markandeya says- 'Naabhaag was the son of King Dishta. One day, he saw a beautiful woman who was the daughter of a Vaishya. He was very enchanted by her beauty and wanted to marry her. He went to the Vaishya and expressed his desire. The Vaishya was terrified at the prospect of facing the wrath of the king. He said- 'You belong to a royal family whereas I am a poor man. There is no match between both of us. Why do you insist on marrying my daughter?'

Naabhaag was not amused at the Vaishya's reply. He threatened to give up his life if he was not married. The Vaishya went to the king and narrated the whole story. The king consulted his ministers and the Brahmins. The Brahmin said- 'Prince Naabhaag should first marry a woman within his own caste, only then he can marry the Vaishya's daughter otherwise he would be committing a grave sin.

Naabhaag was not satisfied by the Brahmins' decision. He decided to forcibly abduct the Vaishya's daughter. The Vaishya went to the king and sought his help. The king gave death punishment to Naabhaag. Hearing of this punishment, Naabhaag went into hiding. The royal army went in search of him and finally found him. Then a tough battle was fought and ultimately, Naabhaag was victorious. The king himself came forward to fight with Naabhaag. As the battle was going on, sage Naarad appeared and requested the king to stop fighting. He said- 'O king! Please stop this battle. Being a Kshatriya, it is not

proper for you to fight a battle with a Vaishya, which your son has become after abducting a Vaishya girl. He is not entitled to fight with you.'

7.11.3 Curse of Sage Pramati

Markandeya says- 'The king stopped fighting at the request of Naarad. Naabhaag married the Vaishya girl. After the marriage, the king ordered Naabhaag to follow a Vaishya's occupation. Naabhaag got engaged in activities like animal husbandry and agriculture. With the passage of time, a son was born and who was named Bhalandan. When he grew up, his mother entrusted him the job of looking after the cows. Bhalandan knew nothing about the job he was entrusted with. He went to sage Neep and told his problem. Sage Neep understood everything and taught him the nuances of handling various weapons as a result of which, he became a master in this art. After this, Bhalandan went to Vasuraat, the son of Pitravya and demanded his share in the kingdom of his great-grandfather. Vasuraat refused to give anything by saying- 'Being the son of a Vaishya, you are not entitled to become a king.' Bhalandan became very angry and attacked Vasuraat with a huge army. In this battle, Vasuraat was defeated. Now, Bhalandan had control over the entire earth. He returned to his father, Naabhaag in order to hand over the reign of the kingdom, he had won in the battle. But Naabhaag refused to take anything by saying - 'I have been cursed by my father to become a Vaishya. I cannot go against his wishes by taking over the responsibility of a king as this would disturb the peace of my ancestors who are in heaven and even I would not attain liberation. The second thing is that you have won this kingdom by your power and strength. It will not be proper for me to rule over this kingdom.'

Suprabha, the wife of Naabhaag was listening to their conversation. She could not stop laughing. She said- 'You are not a Vaishya, because I too belong to a Kshatriya family. During ancient times, a king named Sudev had a friend- Nala. One day both of them went to the forest to hunt. In the forest, Nala saw sage Pramati's wife and became enchanted by her immense beauty. He wanted to marry he and tried to forcibly abduct her. Being a chaste woman, Pramati's wife started shouting for help. Sage Pramati heard her screams and arrived at the site. He became enraged when he saw Nala trying to abduct his wife and King Sudev doing nothing to protect her. Pramati requested King Sudev to protect his wife from Nala. King Sudev lied to sage Pramati about his caste, to help his friend- Nala. He said- 'I cannot help you because I am a Vaishya. You must go to any Kshatriya to take help. Sage Pramati was exasperated. He fumed- 'You will certainly become a Vaishya as you have lied to me about your caste.'

7.11.4 Agastya's Brother Curses Kripavati

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was entrusted with. He went to sage Neep and told his problem. Sage Neep understood everything and taught him the nuances of handling various weapons as a result of which, he became a master in this art.

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7.11.5 Bhalandan and Vatsapri

Naabhaag told his wife- 'I would never accept the kingdom for the second time, which I had relinquished at the instruction of my father. He then instructed his son to rule over the kingdom he had won. Following his father's instructions, Bhalandan started ruling over his kingdom. Later on, he got married and begot a son named Vatsapri. Vatsapri was married to Saunanda when he attained youth-hood. Vatsapri married her after killing the demon Kujrimbha.

There was a king named Vidurath. He had two sons whose names were Suniti and Sumati. One day, while Vidurath was having his usual walk, he saw a large pit. He became very curious. Just then, a sage arrived at the scene whose name was Suvrat. Pointing his finger towards the pit, the king asked Suvrat as to what it was. The sage said- 'A demon by the name of Kujrimbha lives inside this pit. He controls all the events, which occur on this earth and in heaven. He possesses a mace called Sunand and which was made by Vishwakarma. This large pit which you see is the result of the assault, he made with his mace. This

demon is very cruel and wicked. He torments the deities and destroys the oblation sites of the sages. There is one very peculiar characteristic related with his mace. The mace would become powerless if touched by a woman. But this is only a temporary change because it regains its power the next day. But this fact is unknown to the demon. After saying this, sage Suvrat went on his way.

King Vidurath returned to his palace and consulted his ministers. His daughter, Mudaavati was listening to their conversation. One day, the demon abducted Mudaavati. The king sent both his sons accompanied by a huge army to bring her back but the demon defeated them. The king made a declaration that he will marry his daughter to anybody who brings back his daughter and sons from the clutches of the demon.

Hearing his declaration, Vatsapri came to Vidurath and said- 'Give me your permission. I will bring back your daughter and your sons after releasing them from the clutches of the demon.' Vidurath gave the permission. Vatsapri entered into the nether land through that large pit. A tremendous battle ensued between him and the demon. This battle continued for three days. On the final day of the battle, the demon tried to take the help of his mace and went to grab hold of it. But sensing that the demon was going to pick up the mace, she immediately touched the mace as a result of which it became powerless. Being unaware of this happening, the demon attacked Vatsapri with that powerless mace. But he could not harm Vatsapri. Ultimately, Vatsapri was successful in killing the demon.

Vatsapri released all three of them- Suniti, Sumati and Mudaavati from the demon's captivity and brought them back to the king's palace. After the death of the demon, Sheshnaag acquired the mace. Mudaavati's name was later changed to Sunanda, after that mace. King Vidurath became very pleased and married Mudaavati to Vatsapri.

7.11.6 The Kingdoms of Pranshu, Prajaati and Khanitra

Markandeya says- 'Sunanda gave birth to 12 sons. Their names were Pranshu, Praveer, Shoor, Suchakra, Vikram, Krama, Bala, Balaak, Chand, Prachand, Suvikram and Swarup. After growing up, Pranshu became the king. Pranshu had a son named Prajaati. Prajaati had five sons among whom Khanitra was one of them. Khanitra became a mighty king and was very famous for his religiousness and virtuosity. He distributed the kingdoms among his brothers. Shauri was made the king of the eastern region, Udavasu of the southern region, Muni of the western region while Mahaarathi was made the king of northern region.

One day, a minister of Shauri, Vishwavedi instigated him against his brother Khanitra by saying- 'O king! You must try to capture your brother's kingdom as your kingdom is too small for your descendants to rule over. A time may come when your descendants would be forced to choose agriculture as their

occupation because the continuous distribution of your kingdom among your progenies would leave almost nothing for them.'

Shauri said- 'My brother is so kind to me. Why should I cheat him like that?' The minister said- 'The duty of the king is only to look after the kingdom's interest. The relation should not come in the way.' At last, the minister was successful in convincing him. After sometime, the wicked minister also influenced the rest of his brothers. Ultimately, King Khanitra was left all alone as all of his ministers and even his sons were misguided by Vishwavedi. Vishwavedi appointed four priests of Khanitra as the supervisor of Yagyas. One day, while the priests were performing Yagya, four ogresses appeared from the sacrificial fire and tried to attack King Khanitra. But they could not harm him because of his virtuous character. They then turned towards Vishwavedi and the priests and killed all of them. Thus, Vishwavedi bore the fruits of evil deeds.

7.11.7 King Khanitra

Markandeya says- 'People present at the oblation site were shocked to see the dead bodies of Vishwavedi and the four priests. When Khanitra got this news, he too was shocked. Khanitra went to Vashishta and asked him the reason about the deaths of his brother's minister and the four priests. Vashishta revealed the conspiracy hatched by Vishwavedi to kill him (Khanitra).

Khanitra in a sad tone, said- 'Shame on me as I have been the cause of the death of the Brahmins. Had I not taken birth as a human being, my brother's priests won't have died. I am the real culprit. What should I do now? Where should I go? The remorseful Khanitra decided to relinquish his kingdom and go to the forest to do penance so that, he could get liberated from the grave sins of causing death to the Brahmins. He went to the forest accompanied by his three queens after appointing his son Kshup as the king. He did a severe penance for 350 years. After that, he died because of his bad health. All the three queens died too and went to heaven along with him.

7.11.8 King Vivinsha

Markandeya says- 'King Kshup ruled justly in the same way as his father Khanitra did. Kshup's wife was Pramatha. They had a son who was handsome and mighty. He had defeated all the kings and annexed their kingdom. He was married to Nandini, the princess of Vidarbha. Nandini gave birth to a son who was named Vivinsha. Vivinsha was a very mighty king. During his reign, the earth had become very populated. The enemies of King Vivinsha were very afraid of him but his subjects were satisfied by his just rule. King Vivinsha had performed numerous Yagyas and after ruling for a long time, he attained martyrdom while fighting a battle.

7.11.9 King Khaninetra

Markandeya says- 'Khaninetra was the son of King Vivinsha. He was very brave and valiant. The Gandharvas had proclaimed that no one could match Khaninetra's benevolence, who had donated the whole earth after

accomplishing 10,000 Yagyas. Khaninetra had given so much wealth as donations to the Brahmins that there was no need for them to take donations for the rest of their lives.

Khaninetra was sonless. One day, he went to the forest to hunt an animal for sacrificial purpose needed during Pitra Yagya. The performance of this Yagya was supposed to bless him with a son. In the forest, he saw a deer that was cognisant of his desire. The deer requested him by saying- 'O king! You can get my flesh by killing me.' The king was very amazed. He asked the deer as to why it was willing to get sacrificed. The deer replied- 'O king! I don't have any offspring. For this reason, I consider my life as useless.' While the conversation was going on between the king and the deer, another deer came near them and expressed his desire to get sacrificed by saying- 'O king! Please kill me and get the flesh because the flesh of this sonless deer would be of no help to you.' The king was astonished. He asked the second deer as to why he was willing to die. The second deer replied- 'O king! I have numerous sons and daughters and this worries me a lot. Whenever my children go out in search of food, I become very anxious till they have returned to me safely. This way, I pass the whole day and night in anxiety.

The king was very confused. He said- 'I don't know who is superior between a sonless person and a person who doesn't have any son. Although I needed the flesh for the accomplishment of Pitra Yagya but now after meeting both of you, I have become confused. It is true that a man has to face all kinds of sorrows because of their children but yet, a sonless man is not complete and remains indebted. So, I have decided to get a son by doing a penance just like my predecessors did in the past.'

7.11.10 Karandham

Markandeya says- 'King Khaninetra went at the bank of the river Gomti and started doing a severe penance to please Indra. After being pleased by his devotion and eulogy, Indra appeared before him. He said to Khaninetra- 'O king! I am very much pleased by your devotion. Demand anything you wish.' The king replied- 'O lord! If you are really pleased with me, then bless me with a religious and virtuous son because I am a sonless person.' Indra blessed him by saying- 'So be it' and then disappeared.

Khaninetra returned to his palace. In course of time, a son was born to him. He named the child Balaashva. When Balaashva grew up, he became the king after the death of his father. He annexed many kingdoms after defeating his enemies and imposed taxes on them. After sometime, his enemies not only stopped paying him the taxes but also regrouped themselves and recaptured their lost territories. Balaashva had become weak due to the constant battles. He had only the capital city in his possession and had lost the other territories. One day, his enemies surrounded his capital. Balaashva became restless as he would be no match for his enemies. In a sorrowful mood, he heaved deeply covering his face by both his hands. The exhaled air resulted into the manifestation of

numerous valiant fighters, chariots, elephants and horses. Very soon, this huge army covered the whole area.

This army battled under the leadership of Balaashva. Ultimately, the enemies were defeated. Later on, King Balaashva became famous as Karandham because of the huge army, which had manifested from between both the trembling hands of Balaashva.

7.12 King Aveekshit

This chapter contains 6 sections.

7.12.1 Birth of Aveekshit and Abduction of Vaishaalini

Markandeya says- 'Shubhvrata- the daughter of Veeryachandra had decided to marry Karandham. A son was born to them who was named as Aveekshit. The astrologers had predicted a very bright future for him. Aveekshit learnt lessons in handling all kinds of weapons from the son of Kanva. In a very short time, he attained mastery in the art of weaponry. Vara, Gauri, Subhadra, Nibha, Lilavati, Manyavati and Kumridwati had chosen Aveekshit as their husband in a Swayamvara. Aveekshit had also forcibly married numerous other women.

Once, a Swayamvara was conducted in the palace of the king of Vishaal for his daughter- Sudati Vaishaalini. Aveekshit was present in the Swayamvara. But Sudati due to her arrogant nature did not choose Aveekshit as her husband. Hence, he forcibly abducted her by defeating the other kings. The fact that a single man had defeated all of them had made the other kings ashamed of themselves. All of them decided to fight Aveekshit unitedly. They picked up their arms and marched towards Aveekshit with a huge army.

7.12.2 Aveekshit gets defeated in Battle

Markandeya says- 'A ferocious battle ensued between Aveekshit's army and the other kings. Both sides fought bravely and Aveekshit managed to kill many of the kings but was outnumbered and got severely wounded. Aveekshit was finally made captive. Aveekshit and Sudati Vaishaalini were brought to the king of Vishaal. The king instructed Sudati Vaishaalini to choose any king as her husband but she refused this offer. The king then requested his astrologer to choose an auspicious day for her marriage. The astrologer said to the king- 'O king! The present time is not auspicious for marriage but don't worry, very soon, the princess would get married at the advent of the most auspicious moment.'

7.12.3 Liberation of Aveekshit and his Disenchantment

When king Karandham came to know about his son's defeat and captivity, he consulted his friends. All of them decided to attack the kingdom of Vishaal and release Aveekshit from captivity.

Karandham marched towards the kingdom of Vishaal followed by a huge army. A tremendous battle was fought which continued for three days. Karandham

became victorious in this battle. At last, Aveekshit was rescued from his captivity.

King Vishaal decided to marry his daughter with Aveekshit but Aveekshit was disillusioned with life. He said to Vishaal- 'I can never accept such a woman as my wife who has witnessed my defeat. I have decided to renounce life. So, it would be better if you marry your daughter with somebody else.'

King Vishaal asked his daughter to choose any other king as her husband as Aveekshit was not willing to marry her.

But the princess wanted to marry Aveekshit and believed that he still remained an undefeated king because he had fought single-handedly with all the kings. He was defeated only because of unfair means adopted by his jealous rivals in the battle.

'I shall accept only Aveekshit as my husband otherwise I shall remain unmarried', said the princess. King Karandham requested his son to marry the princess but Aveekshit turned down even his father's request. Seeing the futility of his advice, Karandham returned to his kingdom. Aveekshit too went along with him.

Sudati Vaishaalini went in the forest to do penance. She observed a fast for three months. She became very weak but still continued with her penance.

The deities felt sorry at her condition. They sent an envoy to persuade her to discontinue with her penance. The envoy requested her to stop torturing herself. 'You would be a mother of a Chakravarti king who would be mighty and powerful', said the envoy.

Sudati Vaishaalini said- 'How can I become a mother without a husband? I have decided that nobody except Aveekshit will be my husband. But he has turned down my proposal. So, I have vowed to remain unmarried in this life.'

The envoy said- 'O great soul! I have been asked not to reveal much. You must take care of your health. Due to the virtues of your penance, you will certainly become a mother.' Sudati following her instructions and broke her fast.

7.12.4 Aveekshit Promises his Father to get Married

Markandeya says- 'Once, Veera- the wife of King Karandham and mother of Aveekshit had taken a vow to accomplish a very arduous penance. But this could only be accomplished with Karandham's and Aveekshit's assistance. Karandham had assured her that he would provide all the wealth required for the accomplishment of that austerity while Aveekshit had assured her of physical help.

Veera commenced her arduous austerity named 'Kimichhak Vrata'. This particular Vrata had a peculiar characteristic and that was- any demand made during the course of the Vrata, ought to be fulfilled at any cost failing which meant forfeiting all the virtues of this arduous austerity.

King Karandham was consulting his minister about the means that would change Aveekshit's decision regarding his marriage. The ministers said that as Karandham had become old, there was an urgent need for his successor. The question was that who would become king after Aveekshit as he had decided to remain unmarried. This thought was tormenting all of them.

Suddenly, King Karandham heard the priest who was assisting queen Veera in the accomplishment of the Kimichhak Vrata, telling somebody- 'The queen is busy performing the Kimichhak Vrata. What is your demand? I promise, it will be fulfilled by the queen no matter how extraordinary it may be.'

Aveekshit too arrived at the scene. He promised that their demands would be met without delay as it was obligatory for the success of Kimichhak Vrata, which his mother was performing. Seeing the time as opportune, King Karandham said before the people could say anything- 'O son! I have a demand. Promise me that you will fulfil it.'

Aveekshit gave his word. The king said that he aspired for a grandson but this was impossible unless he (Aveekshit) got married. Initially, Aveekshit tried to convince Karandham that it was an impossible task as he had vowed to remain a celibate but ultimately he had to change his mind to honour his words.

7.12.5 Aveekshit Rescues Vaishalini

Markandeya says- 'Once, Aveekshit had gone for a hunt in the forest when suddenly, he heard a female voice shouting for help. He proceeded in the direction of the voice.

After reaching there, he saw Danu's (a demon) son Dhridhakesha, holding a lady by her hair. The woman was crying- 'I am the wife of Aveekshit. This wicked demon is trying to abduct me.'

Aveekshit was surprised as to how could the lady claim that she was his wife. He apprehended that it must be the illusionary tactics of the demon to trap him. But despite his apprehensions, he went near the wailing woman to release her from the clutches of that demon. He warned the demon of dire consequences if he did not release her. The demon left the woman and attacked Aveekshit. A tremendous duel was fought. In the end, Aveekshit severed the head of that demon.

The deities were very pleased at Dhridhakesha's death. They praised Aveekshit for his bravery. They asked him to demand any boon.

Aveekshit demanded a valiant son for himself as per the aspirations of his father- Karandham. The deities said- 'You would get your son from this very woman, you have rescued. The child would become a very mighty king after growing up.'

Being unaware of the real identity of Vaishaalini, he told the deities- 'I had vowed to remain a bachelor but changed my decision only due to the word I had given to my father. But I cannot marry this woman because by doing so, I would be breaching the trust of that woman who wanted to marry me and who had rejected everybody for my sake.'

The deities then revealed to him that this lady was none other than Vaishaalini whom he was talking about. 'She had done a severe penance to be your wife.' After saying this, the deities disappeared.

Vaishaalini requested him to accept her as his wife. 'You have rescued me from this demon. I offer myself to you', said Vaishaalini.

7.12.6 Aveekshit Marries Vaishalini

Markandeya says- 'After Vaishaalini had finished her lines, Aveekshit told her that he was forced to abandon her in the past after getting defeated but once again, he had regained her after defeating the demon. Both of them decided to get married in the forest itself.'

'Right then, a Gandharva- Tanaya arrived there accompanied by many Apsaras and revealed to Aveekshit that Vaishaalini was his daughter in her previous birth. 'Because of the curse given to her by sage Agastya, she was born to the king of Vishaal. Now you must accept her as your wife.'

Aveekshit married Vaishaalini under the supervision of Tumbaru- the priest of the Gandharvas. Both of them then accompanied the Gandharvas to the Gandharva loka. There, Vaishaalini gave birth to a son. Knowing about the feats, the child would accomplish in future, the Gandharvas celebrated his birth ceremony with great fanfare. After the birth ceremony, while Tumbaru was eulogising the child, everybody heard a heavenly voice, which said- 'This child will become famous as Marut; he will become the ruler of all the Mahipals.'

Everybody was extremely satisfied by this forecast.

7.13 King Marut

This chapter contains 5 sections.

7.13.1 Birth of Marut

Markandeya says- 'After Vaishaalini had finished her lines, Aveekshit told her that he was forced to abandon her in the past after getting defeated but once again, he had regained her after defeating the demon. Both of them decided to get married in the forest itself.'

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Everybody was extremely satisfied by this forecast.

7.13.2 Marut Ascends the Throne

Markandeya says- 'After the birth of Marut, Aveekshit accompanied by Vaishaalini returned to his father's palace. After making salutations to his father, he kept the new born baby in his lap and told him that he had kept his word. Karandham became very pleased after seeing his grandson.'

'In course of time, Marut grew up. He had mastered all the scriptures. He was also proficient in handling all kinds of weapons. There was nobody like him.'

'Karandham had become old. He decided to go to the forest after making Aveekshit the king but Aveekshit was not interested in becoming a king. He too wanted to go to the forest. He said- 'The shame of the defeat still remains there. How can a person, who was not able to protect himself, protect his subjects.'

Karandham tried his best to convince him to become his successor but Aveekshit was firm in his resolve Finding no other option, Marut was made the king.

Marut went to the forest and did penance for 1,000 years. His wife did the same and went to live in sage Bhargava's hermitage.

7.13.3 A Hermit Advises Marut on behalf of Veera

Kraustuki asks Markandeya- 'O lord! We want to know more about Marut.'

Markandeya says- 'After becoming the king, Marut started ruling in a just manner. He performed many Yagyas under the supervision of numerous 'Yagyikas' and esteemed priests. Angira's son-Samvart and Brihaspati's brother were his chief priests under whose supervision, the Yagyas used to be performed. Samvart had brought the peak of Munjavaan Mountain after uprooting it, for Marut. King Marut's palace and the sacred oblation site were constructed on this very mountain peak.'

One day, a hermit said to Marut- 'Your grandmother Veera is very tormented by the nuisance, the serpents are creating around the sacred oblation site. She is very displeased by your negligence. The serpents have bitten seven sons of a sage and have also polluted the water of the sacred pond. The sages have started making offerings to the serpents to please them, instead of paying attention on the performance of the Yagyas. Although the sages are capable of destroying the serpents, yet they have decided against doing so as this is not their job. This is the job of a king. A king should be aware of each and every event taking place in his kingdom. You are not aware of the misdeeds of the serpents because you don't have any detective to keep you informed of such events. Being a king, it is your duty to protect your subjects by punishing the wrong doers. If you don't do this then you will become a sinner. O king! Your grandmother is very much concerned about your negligent attitude and wants you to act in a way befitting a king.'

7.13.4 The Serpents take the Refuge of Bhamini (Vaishalini)

Markandeya says- 'Marut was ashamed after hearing the sage's words. He cursed himself for his negligence. He picked up his bow and arrows in anger and went to the oblation site. When he reached there, he saw the dead bodies of seven hermits lying on the ground. Being enraged, he picked up his most devastating weapon named Samvartak. The serpents became terrified as the tremendous amount of heat generated by this weapon had started to burn them. Unable to bear the tremendous heat caused by the weapon, the serpents took the refuge of Bhamini (Vaishaalini)- the mother of Marut.'

'Sometime in the past, Vaishaalini had promised to protect the serpents when in danger. Vaishaalini requested her husband- Aveekshit to persuade Marut against killing the serpents. Aveekshit told her that the intensity of Marut's anger was a result of the grave sins committed by the serpents. 'But for your sake, I will request him to pardon the serpents- If he still does not agree to stop killing the serpents then I will have no option but to destroy his weapon- Samvartak.'

After saying this, Aveekshit picked up his bow and arrows and went to the oblation site accompanied by his wife.

7.13.5 The Hermit’s Sons Come to Life Again

Markandeya says- 'When Aveekshit reached the oblation site, he found that the whole atmosphere was ablaze by the tremendous heat generated by Marut's weapon, Samvartak. He requested Marut to drop his weapon but Marut refused by saying- 'O father! These serpents are the culprits. They have killed the hermit's sons. They have also polluted the reservoir and caused obstacles in the accomplishment of oblation-rituals. I am never going to forgive them.

Aveekshit told Marut that the serpents had taken his refuge and hence he should forgive them to protect the honour of his father's promise. When Marut

did not listen, Aveekshit picked up his weapon 'Kaal' to kill him. Marut enquired from him as to why he was trying to kill his own son, who was just performing his duty of protecting the oblation site from the serpents. Aveekshit replied that he too was duty bound to protect the serpents that had taken his refuge.

When the sages saw both father and son were bent on killing each other, they intervened and advised them against killing each other. Right then, a sage came with the news that the serpents had agreed to make all the dead sons of the hermit, alive.

Thus, all the dead sons of the hermits became alive and once again, the father and son were prevented from killing each other.

From then onwards, Marut took proper care while ruling his kingdom. Later on, he married Sukesha- the daughter of Kekaya, Saindhavi- the daughter of Sindhuraaj, Vayushmati- the daughter of Chediraaj etc. He had eighteen sons from his wives among whom, Narishyant was the eldest.

7.14 King Narishyant

This chapter contains 2 sections.
Markandeya says- 'Among the eighteen sons of Marut, Narishyant was the eldest. Marut ruled over his kingdom for 70,015 years after which Narishyant succeeded him as the king. Marut went to the forest to do penance. After becoming the king, Narishyant decided to perform a grand Yagya, the like of which had never been accomplished by his ancestors. Narishyant made such huge donations to the Brahmins that it was more than enough for their future generations to come.

Once, Narishyant decided to organise another Yagya grander than the earlier one. But no priest was found to supervise it. At his repeated requests, some Brahmins agreed to supervise the Yagya. But this particular Yagya was unique of its kind because the Brahmins played the part of host as well as that of priests. The Brahmins made donations to the Brahmins who were acting as priests. In this grand Yagya, crores of Yagyas were performed in all the directions of the earth at one time. This grand Yagya was possible only because of the wealth donated to the Brahmins by King Narishyant. Narishyant was such a religious and virtuous king.

Narishyant felt joyous that due to his donations, the Brahmins had become wealthy and at the same time, he was also sad that his desire of performing a grand Yagya was not going to be accomplished as the Brahmins no longer needed donations.

7.14.1 Sumana Chooses Dama as her Husband

Markandeya says- Dama was the son of Narishyant. His mother was Indrasena- the daughter of Babhru. He became the master in archery under the tutelage of Vrishparva. He also learnt the nuances of handling other kinds of weapons

under the guidance of Dundubhi. He learnt the scriptures from sage Shakti and the art of yoga from Aashartishen.

Sumana, the daughter of King Charusharma had chosen Dama as her husband in a Swayamvara. But Mahanand, Vayushmaan and Mahadhanu did not like her decision, as they too wanted to marry her. All three of them decided to abduct her by force and marry who ever among them she decided to marry with. Their evil intentions were corroborated by the friends of Dama. Thus, all three of them abducted Sumana. Dama became angry. He asked all the kings who were present in the Swayamvara- 'Tell me whether Swayamvara is religious or irreligious?'

One of the kings said that certainly a Swayamvara is religious and only Dama has the right to marry Sumana as she had herself chosen him. But some other kings supported Dama's opponents. They said- 'Raakshas Vivaaha is the norm prevalent among people possessing arms. Only such a person has a right to marry Sumana who has defeated his rivals.'

Dama became furious with them. He knew that they were saying such things out of jealousy. But still he decided to accept their proposal. He threw an open challenge by saying- 'Anybody who wants to die may abduct my wife in front of my eyes.'

A tremendous battle was fought between Dama and his opponents.

At first, Mahanand came forward to fight him with a sword in his hand. Dama showered a volley of arrows at him. All the arrows were neutralised by Mahanand. After that, Mahanand jumped and climbed on the chariot of Dama. Dama severed his head. After the killing of Mahanand, Vayushmaan came forward to fight Dama but his sword was broken into two pieces by the assault of Dama. Dama then killed his charioteer. After that, Vayushmaan picked up his spiked mace but Dama destroyed even this mace. In the battle, Vayushmaan got injured and fell on the ground. Vayushmaan quit the idea of fighting. Seeing him reluctant to fight, Dama spared his life.

At last, Charusharma married his daughter Sumana with Dama. After staying for some days at his father-in-law's place, Dama returned home accompanied by his wife- Sumana.

7.14.2 Killing of Narishyant

Markandeya says- 'When the newly married couple- Dama and Sumana returned to the capital, King Narishyant was extremely pleased. King Narishyant after knowing about the brave deeds of his son was very proud of him. As he had become old, he appointed Dama as his successor and he went in the forest to do penance accompanied by his wife- Indrasena.

Once, Vayushmaan came in the same forest where King Narishyant was doing his penance. After seeing Narishyant and his wife, he enquired as to, who they were. But King Narishyant did not give any reply as he was observing a Mauna Vrata. Somehow, Vayushmaan came to know about his identity that he was none other than the father of his bitter enemy- Dama. He felt that this was the most opportune moment for him to take his revenge and killed Narishyant. Indrasena on seeing her dead husband, started to wail. All the sages and hermits who were doing penance in that forest arrived there and started cursing Vayushmaan for the grave sin he had committed. Indrasena requested one of the sages to go and inform Dama about his father's death. She said- 'Go and tell him that his father Narishyant has been killed by Vayushmaan while he was doing penance. Now, it was his duty to avenge his father's death.' After saying this, Indrasena committed Sati by jumping into the burning pyre of her husband.

7.15 King Dama and his Marriage with Sumana

This chapter contains 2 sections.

7.15.1 Dama Vows to Kill Vayushmaan

Markandeya says- 'When Dama came to know about his father's death, he became extremely furious. Although he was very patient by nature but still the news of his father's death made him restless. He thought- 'Shame on me. Inspite of myself being alive, the wicked Vayushmaan had killed my father. I have failed in my duty. Being a king, it is my duty to punish the wicked people and protect the virtuous ones. But my enemy is still alive after committing a heinous crime. Now, I will perform my father's Tarpan only with the blood of Vayushmaan. If I fail in doing this, then I would give up my life by jumping into the fire. I will not only kill Vayushmaan but also his whole family. Whoever tries to help him will be put to death. Even if the deities, Yama or Kuber try to help him, they will get destroyed.'

7.15.2 Killing of Vayushmaan

Markandeya says- 'When Dama came to know about his father's death, he became extremely furious. Although he was very patient by nature but still the news of his father's death made him restless. He thought- 'Shame on me. Inspite of myself being alive, the wicked Vayushmaan had killed my father. I have failed in my duty. Being a king, it is my duty to punish the wicked people and protect the virtuous ones. But my enemy is still alive after committing a heinous crime. Now, I will perform my father's Tarpan only with the blood of Vayushmaan. If I fail in doing this, then I would give up my life by jumping into the fire. I will not only kill Vayushmaan but also his whole family. Whoever tries to help him will be put to death. Even if the deities, Yama or Kuber try to help him, they will get destroyed.'

7.16 The Benefits of Listening to the Markandaya Purana

The birds said- 'O Jaimini! This was the way, sage Markandeya had narrated the divine tales to Kraustuki. A person who either studies this Puraan or listens to it achieves great accomplishment. All his desires are fulfilled and he enjoys a long

life. He becomes free from all his sins. Markandeya Puraan is the seventh among all the eighteen Puraans. Listening to it helps a man to atone for all the sins committed during the period of one hundred crore Kalpas. The virtues attained by listening to Markandeya Puraan are equivalent to the virtues attained by making donations at Pushkar or by studying all the Vedas.'

Jaimini replied- 'O birds! You have enlightened my mind by narrating the tales of Markandeya Puraan and have made it free from all sorts of confusion. May the almighty God bless you, may you enjoy a long life free from all the diseases.'

Saying like this, Jaimini went back to his hermitage.

8 Varaha Purana

This Purana consists of the following 11 sections:

Narrates the tale of rescuing of the earth from Rasatal by Varaha incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Its contents in brief are as follows:-

Mangala charan: Praying of Narayana by Prithvi (earth). Tale of the creation. Origin of Rudra, Sanatkumar, Marich etc. Tale of Priyavrata. Tale of Dashavatar (ten incarnations). Tale of Dharma-Vyadha. Tale of Suprateek and sighting of Viratroop (colossal appearance). Tale of Gaurmukha. Karma related to Shraddha. Tale of Prajagana. Origin of Agni (fire). Tale relating greatness of the days. Gauri. Destruction of Daksha Yagya. Wedding of HarParvati, Ganesha, Naga, Kartikeya, Aditya, killing of Andhakasura. Matrigana, Katyayani. Kumer, Dharma, Rudra etc. and their origin. Tale of Aruni. Tales of the days falling in different months. Agastya Geeta. Tale of Shubhvrata. Tale of Dhanyavrat. Dialogue between Narad and Vishnu. Methods for expiation. Tale of Agastya. Geographical description of Jambhudweep, Kushadweep, Kraunchdweep etc. Tale of Andhakasura's vrata etc. Origin of Vaishnava etc.Killing of Mahishasura. Ritual of Kapalik vrata. Dialogue between Prithvi and Sanatkumar. Dialogue between Narayana and Prithvi.
In this section I will introduce some terminology that will be used in most of this paper. Many of these terms may be unfamiliar to the reader, but they are based on sound reasoning (versus historical miscommunications).

Tale differentiating between sorrow and happiness. Tale describing twelve kinds of crime. Expiation to destroy the sins. Methods of Vishnu worship in the evening. Description of Sanatan Dharma. Description of illusion. Description of the karma for salvation. History of Gridhra and Shringali. Dialogue between Chandal and Brahmarakshasas. Greatness of Kokamukh. Greatness of Badrikashrama. Greatness of Mathurakshetra. Greatness of Shalgram. Tale of Shalankayank. Greatness of Stutswamitirth. Greatness of Lohargalam, Panchar kslutra, Vishran tirth and Devavana. Worship of Lord Vishnu at the confluence of Yamuna-Saraswati. Greatness of Krishna-Ganga. Tale of Samb. Greatness of Dwadashi vrat in Rama Tirth. Rituals of installing different kinds of idols. Description of the origin of Shraddh. Methods of removing impurities. Medhatithi Pitrasambad. Kinds of Pindsankalpa. Ritual of Madhupark. Kinds of Madhupark donation.

Description of the appearance of Yama. Description of the court of Yama. Description of the fate met by sinners. Description of hell. Description of the appearance of Yamadoot. Description of Chitragupt's effect. Directions by Chitragupt for expiation. Indications by Chitragupt of the fruits of auspicious-inauspicious karmas. Description of Pativrat. Dialogue between Yama and Narad. Greatness of Prabodhini. Description of the greatness of Gokarneshwar.

Granting of boon by Nandikeshwar. Description of greatness of Jaleshwar. Description of the greatness of Shringeshwar.

8.1 Lord Varah Enlightens Prithvi

This section contains 6 sections as follows:

8.1.1 Prithvi's Queries

Lord Vishnu, in his incarnation of Varah(a boar),had liberated Prithvi(Mother Earth) from the clutches of Hiranyaksha- the mighty demon who had abducted her to rasatal.After being rescued,Prithvi heaved a sigh of relief and looked at her saviour,who was smiling.She curiously asked lord Varah- "How does the process of creation begin in the beginning of each Kalpa? What is dissolution? How do you nurture the whole creation? In what order do all the four Yugas occur and how are they calculated?Why do you take incarnation in each yuga? All these things puzzle me a lot and I request you to enlighten me on all these subjects."

Lord Vishnu burst into laughter and the whole universe,including the deities became visible to Prithvi through his opened mouth.Prithvi became so frightened by this amazing sight that she started to tremble in fear.Lord Vishnu then transformed his appearance and revealed his divine form to Prithvi so that she could become free from her fright.When Prithvi saw the divine form of lord Vishnu,who was in his meditative sleep taking rest on Sheshnag,all her fear vanished.She was extremely pleased to see the divine appearance of lord Vishnu and thanked her good fortune.Prithvi,filled with extreme devotion eulogized lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu was extremely pleased by her eulogy and said-"The answers to the questions you have asked are not easy to understand,but still I Shall try to satisfy your curiosity.The supreme Almighty is eternal.In the biginning of creation,Ego(ahamkar) as well as the five basic elements- space,water,earth,air and fire manifest themselves from the supreme Almighty.Subsequently,the great element-mahattatva,nature and collective conciousness manifest themselves.The collective conciousness then combines with each of the three basic qualities-satva(pure),rajas and tamas(dark) and exits in three different states.It's combination with the dark quality results into the manifestation of Mahadbrahm which is also called prakriti or nature by the enlightened ones.Kshetragya(soul) is considered to be more superior than the Prakriti.This way the different permutations and combinations of all the three gunas with collective intelligence result into the creation of different "tanmatras"(subtle form of matters).From the tanmatras are created the "Indrias" or sense organs.This is the way how the Universe comes into existence.I then create all the living creatures with the help of five basic elements."

"In the beginning there was nothing but empty space.Subsequently,various natural elements like "shabda"(sound),"akash"(ether),"vayu"(air),"teja"(light) and jal(water) came into being respectively - each of the latter manifesting from

the former.Then,I Created you(earth)to provide base to all the living creatures.The combination of earth and water resulted into an "Egg"(anda).As the egg grew in size,I manifested myself as Narayan within it.During each kalpa a lotus manifests itself from my navel upon which is seated lord Brahma.I then request lord Brahma to commence creation.Inspite of all his efforts, lord Brahma does not succeed in commencing his creation.As a result he becomes furious and from his fury manifests a divine child who starts to wail incessantly.The divine child is none other than Rudra who is requested by lord Brahma to begin creation but the child being incapable of doing that decides to acquire power by doing penance and enters into deep water."

"Lord Brahma then created Prajapati from his great toe of his right foot and Prajapati's consort from the great toe of his left foot.The manifestation of Prajapati and his consort marks the beginning of copulative creation and thus Swayambhuva Manu is born.In course of time population increases.This is the way how creation takes place in each kalpa."

Mother Earth requested lord Varah to shade some more light on the creational process as her curiosity had still not been totally satisfied.Lord Varaha replied- "At the end of the last kalpa,when the whole universe was engulfed in darkness,Narayan went into his yogic-sleep.After waking up he found the world devoid of any creature.Narayan,being the supreme Almighty-the creator,the nurturer as well as the annihilator,decided to commence creation.The term Narayan means one who has his abode in the water- naar means water and ayan means abode.First of all five types of "avidya"(false knoledge) manifested from Narayan- tamas(darkness), moha(attachment),mahamoha(absolute attachment),tamisra(jealousy) and andhatamisra(anger).After the manifestation of these five "avidyas",came into existence immovable things like mountains,trees etc.These being the primary creations came to be known as "mukhya sarga"(main creation).Continuing with his creations,lord Brahma created species that were superior to the earlier creation-animals.This particular creation was called "Tiryaksrota"(quadruped).This way Brahma did his creation.Brahma's sixth creation was called Satvik sarga which consisted of the deities who were all virtuous by nature.The creation of human beings was seventh in order and was known as"Arvaaksrota sarga.Even human beings were of three types -those who were predominantly virtuous possessed satva guna had radiant personality and never experienced sorrow but those who possessed rajas and tamas gunas experienced sorrows."

"Brahma's eighth creation was called "Anugrah sarg" in which he created the sages and the hermits for the benediction of the world.The nineth creation of Lord Brahma was called "Kaumar sarg"(creation of adolescent beings).So,these are the nine main types of creation through which Brahma creates.First of all Rudra and other deities manifested themselves and then came into being eternal adlescents like Sanak,Sanandan, etc.Subsequently,all the ten manasputras of Brahma manifested themselves-Marichi,Angira, Atri,Pulah,Kratu,Pulasya,Pracheta,Bhrigu,Narad and Vashishth."

"Lord Brahma's first creation-Rudra had manifested himself as Ardha narishwar(half male and half female). At the request of Brahma,Rudra dismembered his female part resulting into the creation of two distinct forms-one male and the other female.Later on,ten more Rudras manifested from the male form and all of them collectively came to be known as 'Eleven Rudras'."

8.1.2 Priyavrata Attains to Heavenly Abode

Describing the incident which enabled King Priyavrata to attain to heavenly abode Lord Varah told Prithvi-

"Swayambhuva Manu lived during the first kalpa.He had two sons-Priyavrata and Uttanpad.Priyavrata was extremely virtuous by nature.In course of time,he relinquished his throne and after distributing his kingdom among his sons went to Badrikashram to do penance.Once sage Narad paid a visit to his hermitage. Priyavrata received his esteemed guest with all the respect which made Narad extremely pleased.Priyavrata then requested Narad to narrate about some interesting incident which had occured in his life.

Narad narrated about an interesting incident which had happened while he was on his way to meet Priyavrata- "I experienced an amazing incident yesterday while I was passing by a lake in Shwetdweepa.I saw a divinely beautiful woman who was standing alone at the bank of that lake.I was surprised to find such a beautiful woman at such a lonely place.For a moment I became so infatuated by her beauty that I lost all control over my senses.My lust had made me devoid of all my knowledge and learning.Now,I became very worried and ashamed of my conduct-but the damage had already been made.I immediately realized that she was not an ordinary woman.To my surprise,I saw a form of a divine person visible clearly within her body.Within nextfew moments two other male forms revealed themselves.Suddenly,all three of them disappeared leaving behind just that divine lady.I was dumbstruck by this amazing incident.I asked her as to who she was.The divine lady disclosed to me that she was none other than goddess Savitri - the mother of all the Vedas and since I was unable to recognize her therefore all the knowledge had vanished from my memory.She also revealed to me that the three divine men which had manifested themselves within her body were in fact the three Vedas- Rigveda,Samveda and Yajurveda.After revealing these amazing facts to me goddess Savitri assured me that by taking a bath in that lake I would not only regain my memory of the Vedas but also of all my previous births.I eulogized goddess Savitri and thanked her for the blessings showered on me.I then bathed in that lake and to my pleasant surprise I now remembered everything of my past births as had been prophesised by goddess Savitri."

Priyavrat was very surprised and requested Narad to describe some interesting incident related with his past birth.Narad narrated the following incident to him- "In satyayuga,I was born in a brahmin family and was named Saraswat by my parents.I was very studious and grew up to become a renowned scholar.The

almighty God had blessed me with immense riches and I never experienced scarcity of any kind in my life.But,very soon I got bored of my monotonous and routined life. It had become clear to me that there was more to life than just worrying about the gains and losses.So,I decided to do penance to attain salvation.I distributed all my wealth among my sons and went to the bank of river Saraswati,where I first performed the rituals of shraddh in the name of my ancestors and then performed yagyas.I also donated lot of wealth to poor people.Being satisfied,I then went to Pushkar teerth and did penance at the bank of river Saraswat by continuously chanting the sacred mantra"om namo narayan" and brahm paar stotra.Ultimately,lord Narayan became pleased and appeared before me.Lord Sri Hari asked me of my wish and I express my desire to get united with his divine form.But,lord Narayan told me that the world needed me and so this desire of mine could not be fulfilled.He blessed me and gave me my name- Narad because I had 'donated' water(naar) to my ancestors during the course of performing shraddh rituals.Although my wish of uniting with the divine form of Sri Hari had remain unfulfilled but still there was a consolation as I had been fortunate enough to see his divine form with my mortal eyes. Thereafter,I devoted my life to the worship of Sri Hari.After my death,I attained to brahmaloka- I had been adequately rewarded for my devotion toward lord Sri Hari.Later on,I manifested as one of the ten manasputras of lord Brahma when he commenced his creation.It was only because of the blessings of Sri Harithat I came to be regarded as 'lok guru' by the masses.So Priyavrat,if you are desire of attaining salvation then you should follow my example and devote your life in the name of Lord Srihari."

Prithvi,who was listening to the tales narrated by Lord Varah with rapt attention asked him whether it was possible for anybody to see Lord Narayan with his/her mortal eyes.Lord Varah replied -"Lord Narayan has taken ten incarnations in various forms such as matsya(fish),kachchap(tortoise),varah(boar),narsimh(half human and half lion),vaman(dwarf),parshuram,Ram,Krishna,Buddha and kalki.The last incarnation-Kalki is yet to take place.A man can realize Lord Narayan by having total devotion in any one of the ten incarnations. Even the deities are incapable of this divine experience-what to say about humans.Lord Brahma is the manifestation of all the three qualities of Sri Hari and actually it is He(Sri Hari) who creates in the form of Lord Brahma-it is He who manifests himself in various natural forms like earth,water,fire,air and sky-it is He who manifests himself in various abstract qualities like consciousness- He is omnipresent and the whole universe is pervaded by him."

Prithvi was anxious to know whether Narad's sermons had any effect on Priyavrat and asked Lord Varah regarding this.Lord Varah replied- Priyavrat was so impressed by Narad's discourses that he relinquished his throne and went to do penance after equally distributing his kingdom among his sons.Ultimately,he did manage to attain to the abode of lord Sri Hari by the virtue of his total devotion.

8.1.3 Ashvashira's Unification with Lord Narayana

Prithvi asked lord Varah about the famous incident which described Ashvashira's unification with lord Narayan.Lord Varah then narrated the following tale- "During ancient times,there used to live a virtuous king named Ashvashira.He had performed an ashwamedh yagya in which he had donated large amount of wealth.Once,sage Kapil arrived at his palace acoompanied by sage Jaigishavya.King Ashvashira received both his distinguished guests with due honour.After the formalities were over,he asked both his guests about the means by which lord Narayan could be pleased and also about the rituals pertaining to the worship of lord Narayan."

Both the sages being enlightened souls realized that Ashvashira was asking this question out of his ignorance so,they decided to enlighten him on the omnipresent nature of Narayan and said-'What do you mean by pleasing Narayan? Can't you see two Narayans standing in front of you?' But,Ashvashira was unamused and unconvinced so he replied-'I don't deny that both of you possess supernatural powers and also that all your sins have destroyed on account of the virtues attained by doing penance.But,I don't believe your claim to be Narayan.Lord Narayan is the almighty God and the supreme deity.He holds a conch,a chakra and a mace in his hands.He wears pitambar and has Garuda as his mount.His glory is indescribable and incomparable.'

As Asvashira had raised valid points,sage Kapil transformed his appearance with the help of his divine powers.Similarly,sage Jaigishavya transformed his appearance and became Garuda.But,Ashvashira still remained unconvinced and said-'How can I accept you to be Narayan as there is no sign of lotus manifesting from your navel in which lord Brahma has his abode.'

Sage Kapil then slightly transformed his appearance and created an illusion whereby a lotus flower emanating from his navel became visible to Ashvashira.Sage Jaigishavya sat on that lotus flower in the guise of lord Brahma.Not only that,they also created an illusion due to which all types of living creatures inside the palace premise.

Now,Ashvashira was really confused and requested both the sages to break the magic spell.Both the sages decided not to test the limit of Ashvashira's patience and so,they trasformed their respective guises into their original appearances.Both of them said- 'Narayan is one but can manifest himself in countless forms.The whole universe is HIS creation and HE is present in every single creature.It is impossible for a mortal being to bear the radiance of almighty Narayan and it is only when HE appears in his more gentle form that the enlightened person is able to see him.Therefore,you should engage yourself in the service of mankind,considering each human being to be the medium through which lord Narayan manifests himself.

Ashvashira was satisfied by the explanation given by both the sages but there was still one question bothering him a lot so, he asked- 'Who is most likely to attain salvation-a knowledgeable person or a person who indulges in rightful deeds?' Sage Kapil narrated the following tale-'Once,sage Raimya and king Vasu had asked the same question to sage Vrihaspati.At that time Vrihaspati had replied that anybody who performed his duties with a sense of detachment is sure to attain salvation and to prove his point he had narrated the following tale-'During ancient times,there lived a brahmin named Sanyaman.He was the descendant of sage Atri.One day,while he was going to take his bath he met Nishthoor-a fowler,who used to catch birds and animals for his livings.'

Sanyaman reprimanded Nishthoor for his evil deeds and said- Why do you trap innocent birds and animals? Nishthoor replied-'The almighty God is present in each living creature.One who is desirous of attaining salvation must under no circumstances allow his ego to dominate him.The 'doer' is not the man but the supreme Almighty present in him.Keeping this fact in his mind a man should perform his duties with nonchallance and a sense of detachment.If I earn my livelyhood by catching birds and animals then it is the will of almighty.' To prove his point,the fowler spread his iron-net and kept dry blocks of wood underneath it and then requested Sanyaman to ignite those blocks.Sanyaman was surprised but burnt the wodden-logs as per the fowler's instruction.In a short time all the wodden-blocks became ablaze and the flames startes coming out from the thousand of small holes of the iron-net.The fowler then told Sanyaman that although the flames coming from each hole appeared to have distinct sources,yet the fact was that the flames manifested from the single source-wodden blocks that were burning beneath the iron-net.

The fowler said-"It was impossible to extinguish the fire untill and unless the source of the fire was extinguished.Each hole of the iron-net can be compared with an individual and the almighty God with the source of fire.A man does what God wills and he can never experience sorrow provided he constantly remembers the Almighty even while he is performing his daily chores." Sanyaman was very much impressed by the fowler's wisdom. Having finished his tale,sage Vrihaspati told Ramya-"Now it must be evident to you that salvation is within the reach of any individual.It does not make much difference whether the seeker of salvation is a householder or a hermit aspiring for knowledge." Continuing with the story of Ashvashira,lord Varah told Prithvi-"King Ashvashira was so impressed by Kapil's preachings that he went to Naimisharanya and spent his rest of his life in the service of lord Narayan.Once,while he was performing yagya,suddenly lord Vishnu manifested himself from the altar in the form of a brilliant effulgence and the identity of Ashvashira merged with it.This way,Ashvashira got united with lord Vishnu by the virtue of his deep devotion.

8.1.4 King Vasu and Sage Raimya Unite with Sri Hari

Prithvi was anxious to know about the effect sage Vrihaspati's discources had on King Vasu as well as sage Raimya.She asked lord Varah-"What did both king

Vasu and sage Raimya do after listening to the preachings of sage Vrihaspati?"

Lord Varah replied-"King Vasu was so impressed by Vrihaspati's discources that he decided to spend the rest of his life in the service of lord Narayan.He appointed Viwasman-his eldest son as his successor and left for Pushkar teerth.He engaged himself in austere penance by chanting pundarikaksha stotra.One day,while Vasu was chanting pundarikaksha stotra,he experienced an amazing incident-an entity whose complexion was blue, manifested from his body and stood with folded hands.In his bewilderment,king Vasu requested the stranger to introduce himself.

The entity narrated the following tale to him -
"O King,you were the ruler of Janasthan in your second previous birth.Once,while you had gone deep into the forest on a hunting spree,you were delighted to find a deer which in fact was none other but myself.In fact,I had disguised myself as a deer and was wandering in the forest.Being oblivious of this fact you had killed that dear.Later on,when you realized your mistake,you cursed yourself for having killed an innocent brahmin.To get absolved of this sin,you had observed a fast on Ekadashi and had donated a cow to please lord Narayan.But,inspite of all these austerities you did not attain liberation because at the time of your death you had chanted your wife's name whose name was Narayani instead of Narayan.This blunder of your's had stopped you from attaining to Vishnu loka for one complete kalpa.But,my revengeful soul continued to torture your soul till it was driven out by lord Narayan's escorts.It was only then that you were able to attain to Vishnu loka."

"In your next birth you were born as the king of Kashmir.I did not spare you even in that birth and possessed your body.You performed numerous yagyas to get rid of me but all your efforts went in vain as you had not chanted the holy name of lord Vishnu in any of the rituals that you had performed.But,now I was forced to abandon your body since you have been constantly chanting the sacrosanct pundarikaksha stotra.I have also become absolved of all my sin by the virtue of listening to the pundarikaksha stotra."

King Vasu expressed his gratitude to the entity for shedding light on his previous births.Suddenly,a divine aircraft descended from the heaven and king Vasu left for Vishnuloka mounted on it.Meanwhile,sage Raimya got the news of Vasu's ascension to heaven to Vishnuloka,he wanted to emulate the feat of his friend.He reached Gaya and performed shraddh in the name of his ancestors.He then engaged himself in an austere penance.Sanat kumar-one of the manasputras became very pleased by Raimya's penance and appeared before him.He complimented Raimya for liberating his ancestors by performing shraddh at Gaya.He then described the virtues of performing shraddh at Gaya and narrated the following tale –

"There lived a king named Vishal who had no son.One day,he invited few brahmins to his palace and asked them how he could beget a son.All the

brahmins revealed to him that he did not have son because of the curse of his ancestors."You have not performed their shraddh so, they are angry with you and you can never beget a son unless you performed shraddh rituals at Gaya.Vishal went to Gaya as per the instruction of the brahmins.He performed the shraddh rituals and offered pinda-daan in the name of his ancestors.While he was still performing the rituals,he was amazed to see three men descending from the sky-one of them was of fair complexion while the remaining two were of wheatish and dark complexion respectively.Vishal curiously asked them as to who they were.The fair-complexioned person replied-

'I am your father-'sit'.The person with wheatish complexion is my father and the third person amongst us is my grandfather.My father had committed grave sins while he was alive and killing a brahmin was one the gravest sin he had committed.My grandfather was even worst than my father and his dark complexion is nothing as compared to his grave sins.He had killed numerous innocent sages for no fault of theirs.All three of us have come to express our gratitude as we have become liberated from our sins by the virtue of the shraddh rituals you have performed.The water which you had offered to us while performing the rituals have given us the ability to communicate with you,even though we are spirits.'

After finishing his tale, Sanat kumar told sage Raimya that Gaya was supreme among all the places of pilgrimage and the virtues of performing shraddh overthere is incomparable.Sage Raimya dedicated rest of his life to the worship of lord Gadadhar.At last,lord Gadadhar appeared before him.Sage Raimya requested the lord to give him a place in his abode which was dwelled by sages like Sanak and Sanandan.Lord Gadadhar blessed him by saying-'So be it.'This way,sage Raimya attained enlightenment with the blessings of the merciful lord Gadadhar and ultimately attained to the divine abode of lord Vishnu.

8.1.5 Matsya Avatar

Once, when lord Vishnu awakened from his yoga nidra, he found that the Vedas had submerged in the ocean as the result of pralaya (deluge).He incarnated as matsya(fish) to retrieve the Vedas from the ocean-bed.As soon as lord Matsya entered into the ocean,HE attained such an enormous size that the deities became frightened.

All the deities then eulogized lord Matsya and requested him to regain his original form- "O Narayan-the imperceivable lord. You manifest yourself in each and every particle of this Universe.You are omnipresent and exist even during the time of deluge when nothing else exist. O Lord! we are scared of your present form."

On seeing the deities frightened, lord Matsya retrieved the Vedas from the seabed and transformed his appearance from the huge fish to that of lord Vishnu.The deities were filled with joy to see the divine appearance of lord Vishnu.

8.1.6 King Durjay

During satya yuga,there lived a king named Suprateek.Although he had two queens,yet none of them bore any son to him.One day,Suprateek went to meet sage Durvasa,who had his hermitage at the foothills of chitrakut mountain and engaged himself in the sevice of Durvasa.The sage blessed the king and prophesised that he would become a proud father of a mighty son named Durjay.Durvasa's prophesy came true and Suprateek's eldest queen-Vidyutprabha gave birth to a son.The child was named Durjay.In course of time Durjay grew up to become a worthy successor of Suprateek.Suprateek decided to spend rest of his life in the service of God,so he went to Chitrakut mountain to do penance.

Mean while,Durjay being an ambitious king expanded his kingdom by subjugating all the neighbouring states.He conquered numerous mighty kingdoms and vanquished almost all the prominent warrior castes like-gandharvas,kinnars,demons and even the deities.Indra-the lord of the deities was defeated by Durjay and was forced to retreat towards east of Sumeru mountain alongwith the lokpals-various lords protecting different regions of the Universe.The whole world went into turmoil as the fallout of lokpal's power being snatched by Durjay.While Durjay was returning to his capital along with his victorious army,he met two asuras-Vidyut and Suvidyut, who had diguised themselves as sages.Both the impersonators requested Durjay to make some alternative arrangements so that the world could function smoothly.In reality,both of them harboured wishes of having the powers of lokpal's so they offered their services in this regard.Durjay,being unaware of their real identity agreed to appoint them as lokpal's and then proceeded towards his capital.While he was passing by the mandarachal mountain,he saw two beautiful women.Durjay was surprised to find them at such a deserted place.As he stood their wondering about their identity,he saw two hermits approaching him.Both the hermits asked Durjay-"Who are you? What is the purpose of your arrival?

Durjay introduced himself and told them that he was on his way to conquer the whole world.Now it was the turn of both the sages to introduce themselves-"We are the sons of Swayambhuva Manu-Hetu and Prachetu.We had successfully defeated the deities and driven them out from their abode-Sumeru mountain.All the deities went to seek the help of lord Vishnu and were successful in getting his assurance.Lord Vishnu then attacked us and vanquished our army but he spared our lives.Then onwards we became ardent devotees of the merciful lord Vishnu.

Hetu,then pointing towards one of the women said-"She is my daughter-Sukeshi.The other woman you see is my brother- Prachetu's daughter and her name is Mishrakeshi.Please accept both these beautiful as your wives."Durjay readily agreed to marry both of them as they were really very beautiful.He then returned to his capital.

Everything was going quite smoothly for Durjay,when on one fateful day he met his downfall because of his extreme greed.The incident happened as follows-Once,Durjay had gone into the forest on a hunting spree,where he met a sage named Gaurmukh.Gaurmukh had been blessed by lord Vishnu with a divine diamond named Chintamani which was capable of fulfilling all desires.Gaurmukh gave a royal treatment to Durjay with the help of wish-fulfilling diamond.He created an illusionary palace and offered variety delicacies to him as well as his whole army.

Durjay wanted to have chintamani diamond at any cost and therefore sent his minister-Virochan to persuade Gaurmukh to part with that diamond.Gaurmukh became furious after coming to know about the evil intention of Durjay and told Virochan to ask Durjay to leave at once.But,Gaurmukh knew quite well that the greedy Durjay would not give up so easily and would definitely try to acquire chintamani by force.So, he requested chintamani diamond to create a huge army.

Meanwhile,Durjay ordered his chief-commander,named Neel to bring chintamani at any cost.Neel proceeded with a large number of soldiers.A fierce battle took place between both the armies in which Neel was killed and his army got vanquished.Finally,Durjay himself came forward to fight but even he was defeated. In the meantime,Hetu and Prachetu got the news that their son-in-law was in trouble.Both of them proceeded with a huge army to help their so-in-law.But,they were no match for the might of their adversary and both of them eventually dieed in the ensuing battle.

Meanwhile,sage Gaurmukh found Durjay standing at the entrance of his hermitage with a small number of surviving soldiers.He sought the help of lord Vishnu,who appeared within no time.Gaurmukh requested him to punish Durjay for his evil intention.Lord Vishnu severed Durjay's head with his sudarshan chakra.The place where Durjay was killed later on became famous as Naimisharanya.Sage Gaurmukh continued to live at Naimisharanya without any problem.

8.2 Shraddh Rituals

This section contains 9 sections as follows:

8.2.1 Pitras and the Significance of ‘Shraddh

Once,sage Markandeya arrived at Naimisharanya to see sage Gaurmukh.Sage Gaurmukh was delighted to find such an enlightened soul at his hermitage.After the formalities were over, Gaurmukh requested him to shed light on the venerability of ancestors and the significance of shraddh rituals.

Sage Markandeya replied-"Lord Brahma,after having created the sapta rishis instructed them to worship him(Lord Brahma) but they became so arrogant that they started to worship themselves.Lord Brahma felt insulted and so he cursed

them of becoming bereft of all the knowledge.In course of time,the sapta rishis had numerous sons.After the death of the sapta rishis,all the sons performed shraddh so that their souls could rest in peace.The sapta rishis were also famously known as 'Vaimanik'because they had manifested from the mind of Brahma."

Sage Gaurmukh was listening to Markandeya's utterances with rapt attention.He asked about the most appropriate time for performing shraddh and also about the number of 'ganas' each of the pitras were supposed to have.Sage Markandeya replied-"Pitras living in the heaven are known as 'somap pitras' are believed to be the most privileged ones among all the pitras.They enjoy the most delicious beverage-somaras.Their life-span extends for the full period of kalpa and they worship 'marutas'.Sage Marich belongs to this category of pitras."

Pitras belonging to the category of 'vairaj' are revered even by the marutganas.Sanak comes under this categoty of pitras.Each of these pitras have seven ganas.Similarly,pitras known as 'bhaswar' have their abode in the world called 'santanak'.These pitras are revered even by the deities as all of them are 'brahma vadis'(one who has realized Brahma).They remanifest themselves after every hundred yugas. People belonging to any caste can worship the revered 'pitras' with an appropriately modified rituals and obviously with the permission of the brahmin.Some of the prominent pitras are 'Vasu','Kashyap','Marichi' 'Sanak' etc.

8.2.2 The Appropriate Time for Performing Shraddh

Describing the auspicious time for performing the rituals of shraddh,Markandeya told Gurumukh-"A person desirous of performing the rituals of 'kamya shraddh' can do so on any of the following days-a) at the commencement of uttarayan or dakshinayan. b)at the time when vyatipat yoga takes place. c) at the time when vishu yoga occurs. d) during both solar and lunar eclipses. e) if troubled by the evil influences of a constellation or a planet. f) if troubled by nightmares. g)at the time when the Sun changes it's position from one zodiac to another.

The various nakshatras like Anuradha,Vishakha and Shwati are considered to be very auspicious for performing shraddh- especially, if the day happens to be amavasya.Shraddh performed on such a day pacifies the ancestor's soul for eight years.Similarly the combination of amavasya with either 'pushya nakshatra' or 'punarvasu nakshatra' is believed to pacify the ancstor's soul for twelve years.Some other days which are considered to be very auspicious for performing shraddh are-the third day of the bright half of the hindu month Vaishakh,the nineth day of the bright half of the hindu month Kartik,the thirteenth day of the dark half of the hindu month Bhadrapad and amavasya falling in the hindu month of Magh.A man desirous of performing shraddh can do so on any of the above mentioned days.He should take bath in a holy river and offer 'tarpan'(libation) to his ancestors.

8.2.3 Shraddh Kalpa

Describing the types of brahmin,considered to be elligible to preside over the rituals of shraddh, Markandeya told sage Gaurmukh-"The following types of brahmin are elligible to perform shraddh-'trinachiket' 'trimadhu' 'trisuparna' and the brahmins who are well versed in all the Vedas.The shraddh rituals can be performed by any of the following relatives of the deceased, apart from his son-maternal nephew, grandson(daughter's son),father-in-law,son-in-law,maternal uncle,etc.

Similarly,the following types of brahmin should never be invited at the shraddh at the shraddh ceremony-a deceitful or a wicked brahmin,a brahmin who is a habitual backbiter or who is accused of theft,a brahmin who has married a shudra woman and a brahmin who earns his livelihood by working as a priest.

8.2.4 How to Invite Brahmins to a Shraddh Ceremony

Invitation should be given to the all the brahmins one day in advance.If uivited brahmins arrive to attend the shraddh ceremonythey should be treated with due respect.The brahmin who is supposed to perform the rituals should wash the feet of other brahmins to show his respect towards them.He should then help them perform 'achaman'(rinsing of mouth).Finally,the invited brahmins should be fed after the rituals have been completed.

8.2.5 Number of Brahmins

As far as the number of invited brahmins to the shraddh ceremony of the ancestors is concerned,the scriptures have strictly put it to odd numbers-one,three,five,etc.Similarly,the number of invited brahmins for the shraddh of the deities is concerned the number has been put to even number-two,four,etc. But,if the person finds it difficult to invite the above number of brahmins then he can invite only one brahmin for both the types of shraddh.While performing the shraddh of maternal grandfather it is mandatory to perform the shraddh of Vaishyadeva simultaneously.In the shraddh ceremony related with the deities the brahmins should always have their food facing east.On the contrary,in the shraddh ceremony of the ancestors the brahmins should have their food facing north.

8.2.6 Types of Shraddh

A person performing the shraddh rituals should have his seat made of 'kusha' grass.After taking his seat,he should invoke the deities and make offerings of 'ardhya' to them.While offering 'ardhya' to the deities water and barley are commonly used alongwith other articles like sandalwood,incense,etc.During the entire course of shraddh rituals 'yagyopavit'(sacred thread) should be worn in an inverse position-across the right shoulder and not across the left shoulder as it is normally worn.While performing the shraddh of ancestors offerings of articles like sesame seeds,water and kusha grass are normally made.

8.2.7 Shraddh Mantra

It is customary to scatter sesame seeds near the place where brahmins are having food in the shraddh ceremony.The performer of the shraddh rituals should imagine that the food partaken by them are actually satiating the ancestors.The chanting of 'Rakshodhna mantra' is a must.

8.2.8 The Rituals of Pinda Daan

One important characteristic of the rituals connected with pinda daan is the offerings made to manes in the form of sesame seeds and water.Another important aspect is that 'pinda' is offered on the 'kusha' grass which are kept facing south-first in the name of one's dead father and then in the name of one's grandfather and other ancestors.

8.2.9 Balivaishva Deva

The performance of Balivaishva deva rituals mark the end of shraddh ceremony after which the person should sit down along with all the invited guests to have his food.Ancestors become satisfied if shraddh is performed in their names and all the desires of such a man are fulfilled.Three things have great importance in shraddh rituals-black sesame seeds,the auspicious muhurta named 'Kutup' and grandson(daughter's son).Donating silver is considered to be extremely auspicious.A person performing the shraddh rituals should not venture out of his house till the completion of the entire ceremony.

8.3 The Manifestation of Various Deities

This section contains 16 sections as follows:

During tretayuga,there lived a king named Prajapal.Once,while he was on his hunting spree,he entered into a dense forest.He was delighted to see a dear who started running for it's life after hearing the noise. Prajapal let his horse loose in the direction of the running dear.Sage Mahatapa had his hermitage in that forest.While chasing that dear,Prajapal arrived at the hermitage of Mahatapa.Being curious,he entered the hermitage and saw sage Mahatapa.The sage treated his guest with all the respect and offered him fruits to eat.After the formalities were over,Prajapal requested Mahatapa to describe the appropriate way of contemplating on the various forms of lord Narayan which gave salvation to a man. Sage Mahatapa replied-"The Vedas proclaim that all the deities owe their existence to lord Vishnu-Agni,Ashwini kumar,Gauri,Gajanan,Sheshnag,Kartikeya,Aditya Ganas,Durga,all the 64 matrikas,Kuber, Vayu, Yama, Rudra,Chandrama,Pitra Ganas,etc.have originated from lord Sri Hari.All the deities,although appearing to to have distinct identity,are in fact inseparable from lord Vishnu."

8.3.1 Agni

"When Agni manifested himself from Brahma's anger,he requested him(Brahma) to assign an auspicious day to him for his worship.Lord Brahma said-'Since you have manifested first of all the deities,therefore the first

day(pratipada) will be reserved for your worship.One who performs havan on pratipada would be blessed."

8.3.2 Ashwini Kumars

King Prajapal requested Mahatapa to describe how both the Ashwini kumars manifested themselves.Sage Mahatapa narrated the following tale-'Marichi was Lord Brahma's son while Kashyap was Marichi's son.All the twelve Adityas are the sons of sage Kashyap.One of the Adityas-Martand,was marrird to Vishwakarma's daughter whose name was Sangya.Martand had two children from her and their names were-Yama and Yami.Being unable to bear the extreme radiance of Martand,Sangya created her shadow identity and after instructing her to serve her husband(Martand) in best possible ways,she herself went to live at Uttarkuru.Later on,when Martand came to know about the reality,he went to Uttarkuru and found Sangya in the form of a mare.He then changed his own form and became a horse.Both of them stayed there for a long time.In course of time,Sangya gave birth to two sons who became famous as Ashwini kumars.'

Martand instructed both his sons to please lord Brahma with their devotion.Both of them engaged themselves in austere penance.Finally,lord Brahma appeared and blessed both of them by saying-'Your good-looks and knowledge of ayurveda will be unmatched in the world.'It was 'dwitiya'(second day) when lord Brahma had blessed both the Ashwini kumars.This is the reason why this particular day is the reason why this particular day is deeply attached with the worship of Ashwini kumars.'

8.3.3 Goddess Parvati

King Prajapal asked Mahatapa about the reason why goddess Gauri-the epithet of power,had to take incaranation.Sage Mahatapa replied -"Goddess Gauri manifested from lord Narayan and was offered to Rudra as his consort by lord Brahma.Lord Brahma then instructed Brahma to begin creation but Rudra being free from all kinds of worldly attachment refused to oblige lord Brahma and engaged himself in austere penance.Goddess Gauri then merged her identity with Brahma,who later on created his seven 'manas-putras'. In course of time,Gauri was born as the daughter of Daksha Prajapati and hence came to be known as 'Dakshayani'.

Once, Daksha Prajapati organised a grand yagya in which all the seven manasputras were assigned specific responsibilities.Meanwhile,Rudra came out from his meditation and was extremely furious to see the earth occupied by countless creatures.He thought-'Brahma had requested me to create then who is responsible for all these creation? Who has dared to transgress my authority ?' As Rudra stood wondering,suddenly he heard the sound of the mantras being chanted at the yagya performed by Daksha.Now, Rudra's fury crossed all limits resulting into the emergence of numerous spirits and ghosts from his ears.He then went to the oblation-site accompanied by the ghosts and started destroying it.Lord Vishnu tried to protest as a result of which a fierce battle was

fought between both of them.It was only on lord Brahma's intervention that both of them stopped fighting.Lord Brahma said-'From now onwards Rudra would become famous as 'Har' while Vishnu would be known as 'Hari'.He then directed the deities to eulogize Rudra and give his due share of the yagya being performed by Daksha Prajapati.'

Rudra became pleased by deities's eulogy and blessed them.This way,Daksha Prajapati was able to accomplish his yagya with the blessings of Rudra.In course of time,Rudra married Gauri-the daughter of Daksha Prajapati.Once,Gauri went to her father's place to attend a yagya ceremony against the wish of her husband.On seeing her,Daksha Prajapati started cursing Rudra.Gauri was so enraged by her father's attitude that she gave up her life by jumping into the sacrificial fire meant for the yagya.Later on,she took rebirth as Parvati-the daughter of Himalaya.Parvati did an austere penance to get Shiva as her husband.Ultimately her desire was fulfilled and she became the consort of lord Shiva.

The tithi of tritiya is very deeply attached with the worship of goddess Parvati because all the important events of her life(birth,marriage,etc.)took place on this day.This is the reason why tritiya is attributed to the worship of goddess Parvati.A woman who observe a fast on this day enjoys a blissful married life.One important ritual related with the austerity of tritiya is avoiding the usage of salt on this day.

8.3.4 Lord Ganapati

King Prajapal then asked sage Mahatapa about the manifestation of lord Ganapati and about the significance of chaturthi in terms of Ganapati's worship.Mahatapa narrated the following tale- "Once,all the deities went to seek Shiva's help in sorting out a peculiar problem they were faced with- while they experienced all sorts of hurdles and problems in their work resulting into repeated failures in their work,the demons on the contrary accomplished all their work successfully without any problem. When lord Shiva learnt about their problem,he burst into laughter.Hardly had he stopped laughing than a radiant adolescent manifested himself from his opened mouth.The child was so divinely charming that Parvati,who was sitting beside Shiva looked at him without dropping her eyelids.When Shiva found her staring at the child he became jealous.Jealousy transformed into anger and Shiva cursed the child-'From now onwards your face will resemble an elephant and your belly will become large as a pot.In the name of yagyopavit you would have nothing but a snake hanging across your shoulder.'

The child was none other than Ganesh.Lord Shiva's anger did not subside even after having cursed Ganesh. He was still trembling in anger and was sweating profusely.Numerous Ganeshas manifested themselves from those sweat-drops and each of them had a head of an elephant as well as a large belly.Suddenly, lord Brahma appeared and requested lord Shiva by saying-'You should make this divine child,who has manifested from your mouth,the lord of all these

Vinayakas.Thus,lord Shiva made Ganesh the lord of all the Vinayakas and blessed him-'You will be the first deity to get worshipped in any ritual.'

Chaturthi has deep association with the worship of lord Ganesh,as it was on this very day that he had manifested himself.Having prasad,prepared from sesame seeds and worshipping lord Ganesh on this day is believed to bring great auspiciousness.A devotee who worships lord Ganesh on chaturthi never experiences any kind of obstacle in his work.

8.3.5 Nag Devta

King Prajapal then requested Mahatapa to shed light on the origin of the serpents and the significance of 'panchami'.Sage Mahatapa replied-The serpents came from the lineage of Kadru-Kashyap's wife.Sage Kashyap had numerous progeny from Kadru-Vasuki,Anant,Kambal,Karkotak,Padma,Mahapadma,Shankh,Kulik,etc. When all these serpents started tormenting human-beings,lord Brahma cursed them that they would be annihilated during swayambhuva manvantar due to the curse of their own mother.

The serpents became terrified and promised to mend their ways.They then requested lord Brahma to give them a place to live in.Lord Brahma instructed them to go to three different netherworlds-Sutal,Vital and Patal.He also warned them that during Vaivaswat manvantar Janmejay would perform a grand yagya with the objective of destroying the wicked serpents but the virtuous among them would manage to survive.This particular incident had occured on panchami and hence it became the destroyer of all sins.A devotee who worships 'Nag'(serpent) on this day and offers milk will never be troubled by them.

8.3.6 Kartikeya

Describing Kartikeya's manifestation and how his worship got associated with the auspicious day of shashthi,sage Mahatapa told king Prajapal-Once,a fierce battle was between the deities and demons in which the deities got defeated.The reason behind their defeat was the absence was the absence of an able commander who could lead them.The deities went to seek the help of lord Brahma.Being unable to solve their problem,lord Brahma took the deities to lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva invoked 'Shakti' present within his body and thus manifested lord Kartikeya.He was named after the six 'Kritikas' who had nurtured him by feeding their breast milk.Lord shiva then made Kartikeya the commander of the deities on the auspicious day of shashthi.Under his able leadership,the deities finally managed to defeat the demons.

A devotee who worships lord Kartikeya on shashthi enjoys prosperity and gets all his desire fulfilled. A childless couple must worship on this auspicious day to get blessed with a son.

8.3.7 Lord Aditya

King Prajapal asked Mahatapa-"The thought of divine radiance taking the form of human radiance bewilders me.Please clear my doubts."

Sage Mahatapa replied -"When the almighty God willed to manifest himself in other tangible forms,an effulgence emanated from his being resulting into the creation of 'Surya'(The Sun).The whole world became illumined with Surya's radiance and all the deities dwelling within the body of Almighty God expressed their gratitude.Initially,unbearable heat emanated from 'Surya',causing great uncomfort to the deities but later on Almighty God reduced it to bearable limit at the request of the deities.Surya had manifested himself on the auspicious day of 'saptami' hence this particular day became deeply associated with the worship of Surya.

8.3.8 Ashta Matrikas

Continuing with his narration,sage Mahatapa said -"During ancient times,there lived a mighty demon named 'Andhakasur'.Andhakasur had become arrogant because of a boon of immortality received from lord Brahma. Being tormented by Andhakasur,all the deities went to seek lord Brahma's help.Lord Brahma took the deities to lord Shiva who agreed to kill the wicked demon-Andhakasur.

The battle commenced and a fierce dual fight broke out between Lord Shiva and Andhakasur.Shiva attacked Andhakasur with his trident.Stream of blood oozed out from the wound,but to Shiva's utter amazement each drop of blood falling on the ground resulted in into the creation of numerous Andhakasuras.In a short time the battle field was overcrowded with countless Andhakasuras.Now,Shiva's anger crossed all limits and he thundered loudly.Flames emanated from the mouth of enraged Shiva resulting into the manifestation of goddess 'Yogishwari'.Similarly,seven more goddesses manifested themselves from different deities- Vaishnavi from lord Vishnu,Brahmi from lord Brahma,Kaumari from Kartikeya,Mahendri from Indra,Yami from Yama,Varahi from lord Varah and Maheshwari from lord Narayan.All these eight goddesses came to be known as 'Matrikas' and lord assigned them the auspicious day for their worship.A devotee who worships these eight matrikas on ashtami are blessed.The use of 'bael'(wood-apple)fruit on this day has great significance.

8.3.9 Goddess Durga

King Prajapal requested sage Mahatapa to narrate about the manifestation of goddess Durga and the significance of her worship on navami.Sage Mahatapa replied-The mighty demon-Vetrasur had driven out deities from the heaven.All the deities went to lord Brahma and sought his help.As lord Brahma was wondering about his further course of action,suddenly goddess Durga appeared from nowhere.She held various weapons in each of her eight arms and was mounted on a ferocious lion.Lord Brahma was relieved as he was confident that Goddess Durga would certainly kill Vretasur.Finally,goddess Durga indeed killed

the dreaded demon without much difficulty.Later on,all the deities requested her to make himalaya mountain as her abode to which she agreed.This particular place,in course of time became famous as Nandadevi.One who worships goddess Durga on the auspicious day of navami gets her blessings.

8.3.10 Dash Dishas

Having finished the tale of goddess Durga,sage Mahatapa revealed how all the six directions came into existence-"Six divine women manifested themselves from both the ears of lord Brahma during the initial phase of creation.The name of these six divine women were Purva(east),Dakshina(south),Paschima(west),Uttara(north), Urdhva(upwards) and Adhara(downwards).In course of time all of them got married to six different Lokpals. Lord Brahma assigned the auspicious day of dashami for their worship.One who worships all these six goddesses on the auspicious day of dashami is blessed and one who observes fast on this day gets absolved of all his sins.

8.3.11 Kuber

Continuing with the tales of the manifestation of various deities,sage Mahatapa said-"In the process of doing his creation,lord Brahma bellowed as a result of which Kubera manifested himself.Lord Brahma assigned kubera the lordship of all the wealth and prosperity.It was 'ekadashi' when Kubera had manifested himself,so this particular day has deep association with his worship.One who observes a fast on the auspicious day of ekadashi never lives in poverty."

8.3.12 Lord Vishnu

Describing how lord Vishnu manifested,sage Mahatapa told Prajapal -"Narayan - the almighty God incarnated as lord Vishnu to nurture all the living creatures inhabiting the world.Eventually,lord Vishnu entrusted the job of world's welfare to goddess Yoganidra and himself went into his meditative sleep.While he was still in his meditative sleep,a lotus flower emanated from his navel.Lord Brahma was seated on that lotus flower.

The almighty God was delighted to see himself in the incarnation of Vishnu.He blessed Vishnu by saying- 'May you destroy all kind of ignorance with the help of your sword.Hold this chakra I am giving you,to sever the evil influences of 'kaal-chakra'(wheel of time).May all the sins be destroyed by your mace.May the deity-Vayu adorn your hand in the form of a conch and vaijyanti mala in your neck.May the Sun and Moon adorn your person in the form of shrivatsa and kaustubh diamonds.May Garuda be your mount and goddess Laxmi your consort.May people desirous of salvation worship you on the auspicious day of dwadashi.One who worship you on this day will definitely attain to the heaven.'

8.3.13 Dharma

Sage Mahatapa then told king Mahapal about the manifestation of Dharma and the significance of trayodashi-'Dharma manifested himself from the right part of almighty God and appeared like a bullock. The almighty God instructed him to

protect the mankind from all evils and sins.All the four feet of Dharma signified four various virtues-truth,purity,penance and charity.In satyayuga,Dharma was four footed-all the four virtues were prevalent during that era.In treta yuga,the feet reduced to three.The subsequent eras of dwapar and kaliyuga saw the further decline in virtuosity in which Dharma had two feet and one foot respectively.'

'Once,a fierce battle was fought between the deities and demons.The bone of contention was a woman for whom both the side made claims.Dharma intervened and solved the contentious issue to the satisfaction of both the warring sides.Lord Brahma was very impressed by the deftness with which Dharma had handled such a tough situation and blessed him by saying-I am assigning the auspicious day of tryodashi to you.One who observes a fast and worship you on this day will be liberated from all his sins.'

8.3.14 Lord Rudra

Sage Mahatapa then went on to describe the incident that led to the manifestation of lord Rudra and the significance of chaturdashi-'In the beginning of creation,when lord Brahma failed in his repeated attempts to create,he became frustrated.Frustration turned into fury and from his fury manifested a divine entity who cried incessantly.Lord Brahma tried to stop him from crying and said-tvam ma rud(don't cry).This is how lord Rudra got his name.Lord Brahma then requested Rudra to commence creation but since Rudra lacked the power needed for doing creation therefore he refused and went to do penance.Later on, lord Brahma created his manasputras and other living creatures.Daksha Prajapati was one of these manasputras.Once,he had organised a grand yagya in which all the deities and even the demons had been invited.'

Meanwhile,Rudra's penance was disturbed by the constant chanting of the mantras at the yagya performed by Daksha Prajapati.Rudra was infuriated resulting into the emanation of flames from his mouth.Eventually these fire-balls got transformed into ferocious spirits and ghosts.Rudra then reached the place where the yagya was being performed and with the help of all the spirits and ghosts started destoying the oblation site.It was only after lord Brahma's intervention that Rudra calmed down.All the deities then eulogized Rudra and sought his blessings. One who worships lord Rudra on the auspicious day of chaturdashi becomes absolved of all his sins.

8.3.15 Tanmatras

Describing the importance of amavasya,sage Mahatapa told Prajapal-"Once,while lord Brahma was just about to commence the process of creation,suddenly 'tanmatras'(subtle forms of matter) revealed themselves from his mind.All of them being extremely virtuous were eager to go up in the sky to do penance byt lord Brahma requested them to become the 'pitras'(ancestors)of the human beings.All the tanmatras then requested Brahma to make arrangement for their sustenance.Lord Brahma blessed them

by saying-'I assign to you the auspicious day of amavasya.Anybody who performs the rituals of 'tarpan'(libation) on this day would become absolved of his sins.You would sustain yourselves on various things like water,sesame seeds, and kusha grass which are offered by human beings to their ancestors on this day.'

8.3.16 Chandra-Ma

Describing the importance of purnima sage Mahatapa said-"Daksha Prajapati had cursed Chandrama,his son-in-law for maltreating his daughters.As the fallout of that curse Chandrama started waning day by day and eventually became invisible on amavasya.All the deities became worried and went to seek lord Vishnu's help.Lord Vishnu advised them to get the ocean churned.While the ocean was being churned,Chandrama once again manifested himself from the ocean.Lord Brahma then assigned the auspicious day of purnima to him and blessed him.A devotee should observe a fast on purnima and worship Chandrama for the attainment of kowledge,prosperity aswell as salvation.

8.4 Austerities Related with Lord Vishnu's Incarnations

This section contains 10 sections as follows:

8.4.1 Matsya-Dvadashi Vrata

Matsya-dwadashi is celebrated on the twelfth day of hindu month-Margashirsh.On this auspicious day a devotee should worship lord Matsya -the incarnation of lord Vishnu with appropriate rituals and give charity to brahmins.Prithvi was the first one to observe this particular austerity while she was being abducted to rasatala by a mighty demon named Hiranyaksha.A devotee who observes a fast on this day and worships lord Matsya with appropriate rituals attains to Brahma loka and remains their for eternity. Such a person attain's a divine body when creation recommences after the period of deluge.An issue-less woman is blessed with a virtuous son if she observes a fast on this day.Matsya-dwadashi is capable of absolving a man even of the gravest of his sin.

8.4.2 Kurma-Dvadashi Vrata

This particular austerity is dedicated to the worship of lord Kurma-the incarnation of lord Vishnu.It is celebrated on the twelfth day of the bright half of the hindu month 'pausha'.The austerity which commences on the tenth day itself when a devotee is supposed to purify himself by taking a holy bath.On the following day he observes a fast and worships lord Kurma with appropriate rituals.He breaks his fast on dwadashi which marks the conclusion of the austerity.A devotee who observes a fast on this auspicious day becomes absolved of all his sins and attains salvation.

8.4.3 Varah-Dvadashi Vrata

Varah dwadashi is celebrated on the twelfth day of the bright half of the hindu month-magh.This was the day on which Prithvi had been rescued by lord Varah-the incarnation of lord Vishnu.An idol of lord Varah is installed on a pot filled

with water and worshipped with appropriate rituals amidst the continuous chanting of the mantra-'om varahay namah'.Offerings of various articles are made while worshipping lord Varah-sandal- wood,incense, naivedya,etc.After the accomplishment of the rituals brahmins are fed and charity given to them.One who observes a fast on this day enjoys a good health and prosperity.Such a man becomes absolved of all his sins and attains to heaven after his death.

8.4.4 NriSimha-Dvadashi Vrata

This austerity is observed on the twelfth day of the bright half of the hindu month-phalgun.A devotee should observe fast on this day and worship lord Nrisimha with appropriate rituals.This particular austerity is capable of absolving a man from all his sins.

8.4.5 Vaman-Dvadashi Vrata

Vaman dwadashi is celebrated on the twelfth day of the bright half of the hindu month-chaitra.A devotee should observe a fast and worship lord Vaman by saying the following prayer-O Lord!Vaman-the dwarfish incarnation of the almighty Vishnu,who took incarnation on the auspicious day of dwadashi in the month of chaitra-I seek your blessings."One who observes a fast on this day is blessed and protected from all kinds of danger.

8.4.6 Jamadagnya-Dvadashi Vrata

This austerity is related with the worship of lord Parshuram who is also famous as Jamdagnya.It is cele- brated on the twelfth day of the bright half of the hindu month-vaishakh.Before commencing the rituals, a devotee should purify himself by taking a bath and then worship an idol of lord Parshuram kept on a pot filled with water.While worshipping he should make offerings of various articles tothe deity-flowers, sandalwood,ardhya,etc.It is mandatory to remain awake for the whole night.On the following day,he should donate the idol to a brahmin.A devotee who observes a fast on this day gets all his wishes fulfilled and attains to Brahma loka.

8.4.7 Kalki-Dvadashi Vrata

A devotee should commence this austerity by observing a fast on the eleventh day of the bright half of the hindu month-bhadrapad and break it on the following day-dwadashi.He should worship lord Kalki with appropriate rituals.As per the norms of the rituals,the idol of lord Kalki is placed on a pot which is filled with water.This idol is donated to a learned brahmin on the following day-trayodashi.

8.4.8 Padmanabh-Dvadashi Vrata

This austerity is related with the worship of lord Padmanabh-an epithet of lord Vishnu and is observed on the twelfth day of the bright half of the hindu month-ashwin.One important charecteristic of the ritual is that all the organs of lord Padmanabh is worshipped.The idol is placed on a pot filled with water and while worshipping offerings of various articles are made-
flowers,fruits,sandalwood,etc.On the following day the idol is donated to a

brahmin.One who observes a fast on this day enjoys a prosperous life and attains to the abode of lord Padmanabh.

8.4.9 Dharni-Vrata

This particular austerity is observed in the hindu month of Kartik.The rituals commence by worshipping various organs of lord Narayan amidst the chanting of different mantras which are as follows-

- om sahastra shirse namah - head
- om purushay namah - arms
- om vishwa rupine namah - throat
- om gyanastray namah - weapons
- om shri vatsaaya namah - chest
- om jagad grasishnave namah - abdomen
- om divya murtaye namah - waist
- om sahastra paday namah - feet.

Similarly,srikrishna dwadashi is celebrated in the hindu month of Ashadh,shukla- paksha.A devotee should worship lord Krishna on this day and observe a fast.

8.4.10 Buddha-Dvadashi Vrata

Lord Buddha is believed to be the incarnation of Lord Vishnu.The austerity begins on the eleventh day of the bright half of the hindu month-shravan.On this day lord Vishnu is worshipped with appropriate rituals and by making offerings of various articles like flowers,fruits,incense,etc.The following mantras should be chanted while worshipping the various organs of lord Vishnu -

- om damodaray namah - feet
- om hrishikeshay namah - waist
- om sanatanay namah - abdomen
- om shri vatsadharine namah - chest
- om chakrapanaye namah - arms
- om haraye namah - throat
- om manju keshay namah - head
- om bhadray namah - top-knot(shikha).

After the accomplishment of the rituals, the idol should be donated to a brahmin.

8.5 Some Other Austerities

This section contains 10 sections as follows:

8.5.1 Shubh-Vrata

This particular austerity on the first day of the hindu month-margashirsh.It is related with the worship of lord Vishnu and the rituals have some special characteristics-having one meal on the eleventh day of the

month(ekadashi),donating barley to brahmins,worshipping the idol of goddess Prithvi on 'ekadashi', etc.The austerity concludes on dwadashi. On ekadashi,goddess Prithvi is also worshipped alongwith lord Vishnu.Both the idols are installed side by side and covered with white clothes.After that some rice grains are scattered in front of both the idols. As per the norms of the rituals,a devotee is required to remain awake for the whole night.Next morning,he should invite twenty-four brahmins and feed them.He should also donate a cow,apparels,ornaments,an umbrella,woodden sandle and similar articles to them.A devotee who observes a fast on this auspicious day enjoys prosperity.

8.5.2 Dhanya-Vrata

This particular austerity is a form of 'nakta-vrata',which means observing fast for the whole day and breaking it in the night.The austerity commences on the first day of the bright half of the hindu month-aghan and lasts for a year.Rituals include worshipping Agnideva-an embodiment of lord Vishnu,chanting of certain mantras praising the glory of the deity and performing 'havan'.There are specific instructions on the type of food a devotee should have during the course of this austerity-for four months(chaitra to ashadh) he should have delicacies like 'kheer' seasoned in pure ghee.From shravan to kartik he should have food-items prepared from gram-flour. This way,the austerity lasts for one year whereby a devotee observes fast on the first day of every month that follows.The austerity concludes by worshipping an idol of lord Agni made of gold.The idol is adorned with a piece of red-cloth and red-flowers are offered to the deity while worshipping.After the rituals are accomplished,the idol should be donated to a brahmin.The observance of this particular austerity brings good fortune to a man and makes him prosperous.

8.5.3 Kanti-Vrata

This austerity is related with the worship of sri Krishna and Balaram.It commences on the second day of the bright half of the hindu month-kartik and lasts for a year whereby a devotee observes fast on the second day(bright half) of every month that follows.While worshipping Balarama,a devotee should chant-'om baldevay namah'and while worshipping sri Krishna he should chant-'om keshavay namah'. Subsequently,'ardhya'is offered to both the deities.A devotee should have food prepared from barley-flour in the night but those devotees who have resolved to observe this austerity for four months beginning from 'falgun' should live only on 'kheer'.Offerings of rice and sesame seeds are made in the sacrificial- fire during the months of 'aghan' and 'kartik' respectively. The rituals conclude by worshipping the deity 'Chandrama'at the end of the year.Finally all the three idols (sri Krishna,Balram and Chandrama) should be donated to brahmins.A devotee who observes this austerity is bestowed with a charming personality.

8.5.4 Saubhagya-Vrata

This austerity commences on the third day of the bright half of the hindu month-falgun and lasts for a year whereby a devotee observes fast on the third

day(bright half) of every month that follows.According to the tradition a devotee can either worship 'Shiva-Parvati' or 'Sri Hari-Laxmi on this auspicious day. While worshipping,the devotee should chant the following mantras-om gambhiray namah, om saubhagyay namah,om devdevay namah,om trinetray namah,om vachaspataye namah,om rudray namah,etc.One important feature of the rituals is making offerings of honey and ghee to the sacrificial fire.During the course of the rituals,a devotee should have food prepared from pure cereals preferably wheat. After the rituals are accomplished at the end of the year,the idols should be donated to brahmins.One who observes this austerity is blessed with good fortune in his successive seven births.

8.5.5 Avighna-Vrata

As the name implies,this austerity clears all the obstacles faced by a man.It commences on the fourth day of the bright half of the hindu month-falgun and lasts for four months whereby a devotee observes fast on the fourth day(bright half) of every month that follows.One important characteristic of this austerity is the importance and use of sesame seeds in it's rituals.It is not only the chief constituent of the diet but it is also offered in the sacrificial fire and donated to the brahmins as well.After observing this austerity for four months,a devotee should conclude it by worshipping lord Ganesh in the fifth month and donating the Ganesh-idol to a brahmin alongwith five pots filled with sesame seeds.While worshipping lord Ganesh,he should chant the following mantras-om shooray namah, om dhiray namah,om gajananay namah,om lambodaray namah,om ekdanshtray namah,etc.A devotee thus becomes free from all kind of obstacles and all his wishes are fulfilled.

8.5.6 Shanti-Vrata

This austerity commences on the fifth day of the bright half of the hindu month-kartik and lasts for a year whereby a devotee observes fast on the fifth day(bright half) of the every month that follows.It is related with the worship of lord Vishnu and Sheshnag.A devotee should abstain from hot and spicy food during the course of this austerity.Lord Vishnu's idol is purified by chanting mantras and by performing ablution with milk.Offerings of sesame seeds and milk are made in the sacrificial fire.After the accomplishment of the rituals at the year end,brahmins are invited and fed.Finally,the idol of Sheshnag is donated to one of them.A devotee who performs this austerity becomes free from all kinds of turbulence in his life and experiences peace and tranquility.

8.5.7 Kaam-Vrata

This austerity is related with the worship of lord Kartikeya and is observed in the bright half of the hindu month-pausha.On the sixth day of this month,a devotee is expected to live on nothing else but fruits.Lord Kartikeya is also known by several other names-Shadanan,Senani,Kritikasut,Kumar,Skand,etc. The austerity concludes by feeding the brahmins at the year end and making donations to them.A devotee who observes this austerity gets all his wishes fulfilled.

8.5.8 Aarogya-Vrata

This austerity is related with the worship of lord Surya Narayan who is also known by several other names like Aaditya,Bhaskar,Ravi,Bhanu,Diwakar,Prabhakar,etc.A devotee should observe a fast on the seventh day of any month and worship lord Suryanarayan.The fast should be broken on the next day-ashtami.A devotee can continue this ritual for one year following the above mentioned rituals. A devotee who observes the rituals of this austerity becomes free from all kind of diseases and enjoys a healthy life.

8.5.9 Putra-Prapti Vrata

This austerity commences on the eighth day of the bright half of the hindu month-bhadrapad.The rituals consist of taking a 'sankalp' on the preceding day(saptami)and worshipping lord sri Hari on the next day with appropriate rituals.Offerings are made to the sacrificial fire,which usually consist of articles like barley,sesame seeds,ghee,etc.The austerity concludes by feeding the invited brahmins and making donations to them.This way,the austerity continues for a year whereby a devotee observes fast on 'ashtami' of every month.A sonless person is blessed with a son if he observes this austerity with total devotion .This austerity,which is popularly known as 'Krishna ashtami'also helps a devotee to become absolved of gravest of sin.

8.5.10 Shaurya and Sarva Bhaum Vrata

Shaurya and Sarva Bhaum vrata is related with the worship of goddess Durga and is observed on the nineth day of the bright half of the hindu month-ashvin.The rituals commence by taking a 'sankalp' as well as observing a fast on the preceding day(saptami).The fast is broken on the next day(ashtami) by having fruits.Cereals are excluded from the diet.One important aspect of this austerity is the worship of virgin girls along with goddess Durga.One who observes the rituals of this austerity attains power valour and strength. Sarva bhaum vrata is related with the worship of all the ten directions,considered as goddesses.A fast is observed on the tenth day of the bright half of the hindu month-kartik and lasts for a year whereby a devotee observes fast on the tenth day(bright half) of every month that follows.One important charecteristic of this fast is that it is broken at the end of the day by having rice and curd.Making sacrifices in the name of all the ten directions are the inseparable part of this austerity.A devotee,who observes this austerity lasting for a year remains invincible in whatever he does.

8.6 The Significance of Dhenu-Daan

This section contains 5 sections as follows:

8.6.1 Til Dhenu-Daan

As the name implies,an idol of a cow made from powdered sesame seeds is donated to a brahmin.The idol should weigh not less than sixteen 'prasthas'(one prastha=four kudav,ancient units of weight measurment) Similarly,a calf's idol made from powdered sesame seeds and weighing four 'prasthas'is donated to a

brahmin.Apart from these idols ofcow and calf a devotee should also donate'deer-skin'. While donating these things,he should pray in the following way-'O Til dhenu!Bless me so that I enjoy prosperity and never experience scarcity of any kind in my life.'The brahmin receiving the donation should express his gratitude in the following way-O goddess! I am receiving you in all humility.Bless and nurture my whole family.'A person who donates 'Til Dhenu'get's all his wishes fulfilled and attains to Vishnu loka after his death.

8.6.2 Jal Dhenu-Daan

The method of donating 'Jal Dhenu' is as follows-first of all small area of land is purified by coating it with cow dung and place two small pots are placed at the centre.These pots are filled with different things like water,camphor,sandalwood,etc.The devotee should then imagine goddess Jal Dhenu and her calf to be dwelling in those pots respectively.Both the pots are adequately adorned with various articles like sandalwood,flowers and then worshipped.After the completion of the rituals both the idols are donated to brahmins.A person who donates Jal Dhenu or a brahmin who accepts it attains to Vishnu loka after being absolved of all his sins.

8.6.3 Rasa Dhenu Daan

First of all,the area is purified by coating it with cow-dung after which a black deer-skin is spread on it alongwith 'kusha grass'.Two pots-one large and the other a small one are placed side by side.These pots are filled with sugarcane juice and symbolize 'Rasa-Dhenu' and the calf.Four sugarcanes symbolizing the four legs of 'Rasa-Dhenu' are fixed at four corners.After that,one small silver piece is placed at the base of each of the sugarcanes symbolizing hoofs.Rasa-Dhenu is then adorned with colourful cloths and flowers.Again,four small pots filled with sesame seeds are kept at the four corners near Rasa-Dhenu.After the worship is accomplished,Rasa-Dhenu is donated to a brahmin.A person who donates Rasa-Dhenu is liberated from all his sins and all his ancestors as well as the generations to come attain to the Heaven.

8.6.4 Gud-Dhenu Daan

As it is amply clear by the name,in this ritual some jaggery is taken and given the shape of a cow and a calf.The land is purified by coating it with cow-dung.After that,a black deer-skin is spread on that purified area.Some kusha grass are then spread on the dear-skin and covered with a piece of cloth.Now,both the idols of cow and it's calf are worshipped with appropriate rituals after which they are donated to brahmins.A devotee should also should also donate shoes,umbrella and if possible,a gold ring to brahmins.Donating a Gud-Dhenu enables a man to attain to such divine world where sages and hermits dwell.By doing thus,he also liberates his ancestors and the future generations.

8.6.5 Sharkara-Dhenu Daan

In this ritual,idols of a cow and a calf are made from sugar.After being worshipped they should be donated to a brahmin.A devotee should live only on

sugar for a day.Donating a Sharkara-Dhenu liberates a man from all his sins. Similarly,donating Madhu-Dhenu(made from honey),Kheer-Dhenu(made from rice and milk),Dadhi-Dhenu(curd),Navneet-Dhenu(made from butter),Lavan-Dhenu(salt) and Karpas-Dhenu(cotton) are all believed to bestow incomparable virtues to a devotee.

8.7 Sacred Places of Pilgrimage

This section contains 18 sections as follows:

8.7.1 Kokamukh Teertha

Describing the holiness of Kokamukh-teerth,lord Varah narrated a tale to Prithvi-"Once,a fisherman was trying to catch a large fish in a lake situated at Kokamukh.Suddenly,a hawk which was flying in the sky, descended down and after picking the fish in it's beak tried to fly away.But,as the fish was a large one, the hawk could not hold it for too long.As a result,the hawk fell on the ground being unable to bear the weight of the fish.But amazingly,the hawk turned into a handsome prince as soon as it touched the ground."

"In the meantime,the fisherman's wife arrived there carrying some meat-pieces in her hand.A kite,which was flying in the sky tried to snatch those meat-pieces.Seeing this,the fisherman killed that kite with one shot of his arrow.In course of time,the kite took rebirth as a princess of Chandrapur.She was extremely beautiful but hated men.Similarly,the fish was reborn as a prince.As the destiny would have liked it,both of them got married.There was a dramatic change in the attitude of the princess after the marriage as she no longer hated men.On the contrary,she loved her husband so much that she dreaded the thought of separation for even a moment."

"One day,the prince had a severe headache which showed no sign of subsiding.The princess became very worried and summoned the royal physician.The physician left no stone unturned to cure his royal physician but without any success.Somehow,the prince remembered everything about his previous birth and had a firm belief that he would be cured of his illness once he reached Kokamukh-the sacrosanct place of pilgrimage. So he decided to go there accompanied by the princess."

"Both of them reached a place at Kokamukh where they saw the remains(skeleton)of a fish lying on the ground.The prince revealed to his wife that he was a fish in his previous birth and that the skeleton was his.Then he went on to describe the cause of his headache which according to him was due to the injury sustained in his past birth when he had been badly mauled by a hawk.The princess was aware of her past birth as a kite,so she revealed how she had been killed by a fisherman in her previous birth.She also told her husband -'Dying at Kokamukh in my previous birth prove to be a blessing to me as I was reborn as a princess.Had it not been so,I would certainly have not born as a princess." "Both of them worshipped lord vishnu and as a result the prince

was cured of his severe headache.Such is the greatness of Kokamukh-the reliever of all pains and miseries."

8.7.2 Mayapuri (Haridvara) Teertha

Narrating about the sanctity of Mayapuri,lord Varah told Prithvi- "There lived a brahmin named Somsharma at Mayapuri.He was a great devotee of mine(lord sri Hari)and had an impossible desire of witnessing my divine powers by his mortal eyes.I tried to make him understand about the futility of his desire but to no avail. Finally I was left with no option but to fulfil his wish.One day Somsharma had gone to take his bath in the holy Ganges.Hardly had he taken a dip than he found himself experiencing the pangs of birth in the womb of a nishad woman.Evidently,lord sri Hari had began giving a glimpse of his divine powers to Somsharma.It was a terrible experience for him and he vowed to lead a chaste life as soon as he came out of the womb."

"Unfortunately,he forgot everything about his vow once he took rebirth as a girl.In course of time,the girl grew up and married a young nishad.She had many children from him.One day,the nishad girl who in reality was Somsharma,went to take a bath in the holy Ganges.As soon as she entered into the river,she got transformed into a hermit.She was filled with extreme bewilderment but this was not the end,as there were more surprises to come."

"The hermit(previously nishad and originally Somsharma)came out of thr river and looked all around in amazement.He then sat down to meditate and very soon he was engrossed in his meditation.In the evening,some sages arrived and said-'Sir! how come you are sitting here?You had gone to take a bath.We became anxious and started searching for you when you did not return till evening." "The hermit was bewildered by the turn of events as he was aware of every incident that had occured.He was also well aware that he had spent fifty years as nishad-woman but according to the statements of hermits he had been absent only for few hours.The hermit was totally confused about his real identity.I(lord Varah) felt pity on his miserable condition and decided to lift my magic spell.I asked him whether his wish of witnessing my divine powers had been fulfilled or not.The hermit eulogized me and agreed that it was impossible for any mortal to understand the ways of Aimighty.I then blessed him and transformed him into Somsharma once again."

Such is the grandeur of Mayapuri-the sacrosanct place where lord sri Hari has manifested his divine powers.A devotee who goes on a pilgrimage to Mayapuri never gets entangeled in the worldly illusions.

8.7.3 Kubjaamrak (Hrishikesh) Teertha

Describing how Kubjaamrak teerth derived it's name,lord Varah told Prithvi-"In satyayuga,at the time when the earth was still submerged in water,I had killed two mighty demons named Madhu and Kaitabh.After killing both the demons I looked all around and found sage Raimya engrossed in his penance.Sage Raimya was a great devotee of mine.

I was extremely impressed and watched him hiding myself behind a mango tree.The mango tree could not bear the weight of my hands and became curved.This is how Kubjaamrak teerth derived it's name.Very soon,sage Raimya found out that I was hiding behind that mango tree.He eulogized me and requested me to to grant a special status to Kubjaamrak teerth among all the holy places.I blessed him and thus Kubjaamrak teerth became one of the holiest places.There are several other holy places situated in the vicinity of Kubjaamrak teerth-Manas-teerth,Maya-teerth,Sarvakamik- teerth,Purnamukh teerth,Agni-teerth,Shukra-terth,Manasar teerth,Sapta samudrak-teerth,etc.All these holy places including Kubjaamrak teerth are capable of giving salvation to a man."

8.7.4 Badrikashram

Continuing with his tale,lord Varah told Prithvi-"There is a sacred place in the Himalayas which is very inaccessible.It is famously known as Badrikashram and holds an important place among all the holy places.One who makes a pilgrimage to that place gets all his wishes fulfilled.There is a reservoir at the mountain top called Brahma kund.One who observes fast for three consecutive nights and takes a holy dip in that reservoir attains virtues similar to "Agnishtom yagya".One who takes his last birth in it's vicinity certainly attains to my abode.There are several other holy places in the vicinity of Badrikashram like Agnisatya pad, Indra loka,Satya loka,Chatuhsrota,Ved dhar,etc.Ved dhar is the same place where the vedas had manifested from lord Brahma's mouth.

8.7.5 Mandar Teertha

Mandar teerth is named after a celestial tree called Mandar.This sacred place of pilgrimage is situated at the foothills of vindhya mountain.There is a large mandar tree overthere which has some unique qualities.This tree is visible only on auspicious days of dwadashi and chaturdashi and becomes invisible on the rest of the days.Some other holy places situated in the vicinity of mandar teerth are Prapan,Modan,Baikunthkaran,etc.

There is another holy place called mandar but it is situated on the Meru mountain.This holy place is also known as'Syamantpanchak'One important characteristic of this holy place is that there are huge rocks resembling a mace,a wheel,a plough and a conch.

8.7.6 Someshwar Linga

Chandra deva had once performed an austere penance to get absolved from the curse of his Daksha Prajapati his father-in-law.During the course of his penance Chandra deva made a shiva linga and worshipped it.Finally lord Shiva appeared and agreed to dwell in that particular shiva linga as per the request of Chandra deva. There is a reservoir situated to the south of Someshwar temple which is believed to liberate a man from all his sins.In course of time this place became famous as Someshwar linga.

8.7.7 Shalgram Kshetra

Prithvi requested lord Varah to shed light on the famous penance which sage Shalankayan had performed.Lord Varah narrated the following tale-"Long long ago sage Shalankayan did an austere penance to please me(lord Vishnu).There was a 'sal' tree nearby and the sage was ignorant of the fact that I dwell in that sacred tree.When I appeared,he requested me to bless him with a divine son who had qualities like lord Shiva.I revealed to him that his son(Nandikeshwar)had already manifested and was presently staying at 'Vraja'(Mathura).I also revealed to him that although I was present in the 'sal' tree but he was unware of this fact because of his ignorance.In course of time,this very place became famous as 'Shalgram teerth'.A devotee who makes a pilgrimage to this holy place is liberated from all kinds of worldly bondages."

8.7.8 Ruru Kshetra

Lord Varah told Prithvi-"This holy place is named after Ruru-the daughter of Devadutt and an apsara named Pramlocha.Devadutt came from the lineage of sage Bhrigu.Once,Devadutt did an austere penance to please lord Shiva.His penance continued for ten thousand years.Indra became worried and sent a beautiful apsara named Pramlocha to disturb his penance.Unfortunately,Devadutt fell into the trap laid by Indra.He was infatuated by Pramlocha's divine beauty and enjoyed an intimate life with her for a long time.Finally,he realized his mistake and regretted his foolishness.He decided to abandon Pramlocha and recommence his penance.Ultimately,he was successful in pleasing lord Shiva and attaining to shiva loka."

"Meanwhile,Pramlocha who was pregnant, gave birth to a girl child and died.The baby girl was nurtured and brought up by a deer named Ruru after whom she got her own name.In course of time Ruru after Ruru grew up and decided to please lord Vishnu by her penance.She did an austere penance for one hundred years by remaining still at a place.At last I(lord Vishnu)became pleased by her total devotion and appeared before her.She requested me to name that place on her.I blessed her and thus that place became famous as Ruru kshetra."

8.7.9 Gonishkraman Teertha

Lord Shiva told Prithvi-"Gonishkraman teerth is situated in the himalayas.Sage Aurva had his hermitage at this sacred place which was incidentally burnt to ashes by lord Shiva.Aurva cursed Shiva as the result of which Shiva started wandering throughout the world in a restless manner."

"Once,lord Shiva visited the hermitage of sage Aurvanam accompanied by his consort-Uma.The purpose of the visit was to seek Aurvanam's help in curing his restlessness.Sage Aurvanam advised him to have a bath with the milk of surabhi cow.I(lord Vishnu) then brought down seventy-seven surabhi cows from the heaven and thus helped Shiva take bath with their milk.At last,Shiva's reastlessness came to an end and this holy place became famous as 'Gonishkraman' teerth."

8.7.10 Stootswami Teertha

Lord Varah then went on to describe the greatness of Stootswami teerth and told Prithvi-"I shall incarnate as Krishna at this place in the era of dwapar.I shall take birth in the house of Vasudeva and Devaki.There is a pond situated at about 5 kosas from Stootswami teerth.Anybody who take holy dips in it's holy water for five days becomes absolved of all his sins.

8.7.11 Dvaraka

Lord Varah told Prithvi-"There is a holy place called 'Panchsar' in Dwarka.Anybody who stays there for six days and takes holy dips in 'Panchasar' enjoys all the pleasures of life.Dwarka is situated at the sea-shore and the crocodiles living there never trouble people taking their bath.These crocodiles also have one unique characteristic-they never eat anything that is offered to them by a sinner but unhesitatingly accept anything from a virtuous person.There are several other holy places in and around Dwarka-Panchpind,Hanskunda,Hansteerth,Chakrateerth,Raivatak, Vishnu-sankaram,etc.Vishnu sankaram is the very place where I,in my incarnation as Krishna would be killed by a hunter named Jara.

8.7.12 Sanandoor Teertha

This holy place is situated between Malay mountain and the ocean. Nearby,there is another holy place called Sangaman where sri Ram while on his way to lanka had confronted the ocean.There are also many other sacred places in the vicinity like Shakrasar, Shurparak,etc.There are hermitages of sri Ram and Parshuram at Shurparak.

8.7.13 Lohargal Teertha

Lord Varaha told Prithvi-"There is a region inhabited by mlecchas,situated at the distance of some 30 yojans.This region is surrounded by Himalaya mountain in it's central as well as southern parts.Lohargal teerth is situated near this region and is well protected by nature which makes it very inaccessible. Once,demons tried to invade this holy place but all of them were killed by me(sri Hari).I also protected Brahma and Rudra from the wrath of the demons and named that place Lohargal.Lohargal is the most sacred place of pilgrimage and spread in the area of 25 yojans.It is a self manifested place and has immense religious significance.

8.7.14 Mathura

Describing the majesty of Mathura,lord Varaha told Prithvi- "Mathura is very dear to me because this is the very place where I shall be taking incarnation as Krishna.Mathura is the most sacro-sanct place and no other holy place can be compared to it. There are many other holy places in and around Mathura-Vishranti, Surya teerth,Koti teerth,Vayu teerth,etc.Each one of them has it's own religious significance.A holy pond named 'Vatsa-krindan' lies in Mathura region.Anybody taking a holy dip in that holy pond is certain to attain to the abode of 'Vayu'.In the vicinity lies Vrindavan,the holiest place which would be witness to many of my divine plays."

8.7.15 Chakra Teertha

It is situated to the north of Mathura and lord Bhadreshwar has his dwelling place overthere.A person who makes a pilgrimage to Chakra teerth and observes a fast for a day becomes absolved of heinous of sins.

8.7.16 Kapil Teertha

Describing the origin of 'Kapil Varah'(an idol of lord Varah made by sage Kapil)lord Varah told Prithvi-"Sage Kapil was a great devotee of mine.He had made my idol and worshipped it regularly. Later on,Indra acquired it and started worshipping it.The demon king Ravan took it to lanka after defeating Indra in a battle.In treta yuga I(sri Ram)defeated him and made Vibhishan,his brother the king of Lanka.This way,the idol came under the possession of Vibhishan but he agreed to part with it at my request.This was how I brought that idol to Ayodhya.After reaching Ayodhya,I presented it to Shatrughan as a reward for killing Lavanasur. Later on,while Shatrughan was going to Mathura he carried that idol along with him."

8.7.17 Govardhan Teertha

Lord Varah,continuing with the description of various holy places told Prithvi about the magnificence of Govardhan parvat- "Govardhan parvat is situated near Mathura.It will have great religious importance because it will witness a great feat of mine in dwapar yuga.I shall lift this mountain to protect people from the incessant rain caused by Indra.There are numerous holy places of great religious significance in the vicinity of Govardhan mountain like Indra teerth,Yama teerth,Varun teerth and Kuber teerth.There is also a famous fresh-water lake called 'Kadamb khand'where people perform tarpan of their ancestors."

8.7.18 Gokarn Teertha

Lord Varah told Prithvi about the greatness of Gokarna teerth- "Long long ago there lived a vaishya named Vasukarn at Mathura. Sushila,his wife was deeply religious but inspite of that she was issueless.One day,she had gone to take her bath in river Saraswati where she found many women taking their bath.The children of these women were playing nearby.Sushila became very sad and being unable to control her emotions started crying."

"A sage saw her crying and asked her as to what made her so sad. Sushila narrated her woeful tale to him.The sage took pity on her and advised her to worship lord Gokarna.The sage said-'You will definitely be blessed with a son.' Sushila went home and narrated the whole incident to her husband.Both of them started worshipping lord Gokarna Mahadev with total devotion.After ten years,a son was born to them. Vasukarn named that child after lord Gokarna to express his gratitude to the deity."

"In course of time,Gokarna grew up and got married but even after a long time he did not have a progeny.So,his father married him to three more women,one after another, but even this did not prove to be of any help to Gokarna because

he remained a sonless person.This made Gokarna very sad and he engaged himself in various charitable activities thinking that the virtues thus attained might bless him in begetting a son.He got constructed many temples and ordered wells to be dug up for the benifit of the travellers.Very soon,all his money was spent and he became worried about the future of his family.So,he decided to go to distant places to earn wealth." "Once,while on his journey he met a divine parrot who possessed tremendous knowledge.Gokarna was very much impressed by the parrot's knowledge.He asked the parrot from where had it imbibed such divine knowledge.The parrot revealed to him that he was Shukodar in it's previous birth and was a learned man.He had attained the form of parrot due to the curse of sage Shukdev. But,sage Shukdev had been kind enough to allow him to retain all the knowledge in his next birth.The parrot also told Gokarna how it had been kept inside a cage by a fowler and requested him to help it out from the captivity."

"Gokarna requested the fowler to give the learned parrot to him. The fowler agreed but asked for all the virtues attained by Gokarna in return.Gokarna happily agreed to donate all his virtues and proceeded with that parrot.Now, Gokarna had become bereft of all his virtues he had attained so far.Once,while he was on a voyage in connection with his trade the ship was caught in a severe cyclone and the chances of survival looked very bleak.All his fellow travellers had a misconception that they had been struck by the misfortune only because of Gokarna's sins.The parrot was saddened after hearing what people said about his master.It decided to help him and flew away towards north.While flying it found a vishnu temple where many divine women and other creatures had gathered to worship.The descendants of Jatayu were also among them.The parrot narrated the woeful tale of his master to all of them.All the divine birds decided to help Gokarna."

"The divine birds instructed the parrot to follow them and then flew towards the place where Gokarna's ship was stranded.Finally, they were successful in rescuing Gokarna and bringing him back to the same temple.Gokarna worshipped lord Keshav and performed the rituals of tarpan in the name of his ancestors.In the meantime,all the divine women also arrived there to worship.They were pleased to meet Gokarna and gave him divine food to eat.They also allowed him to stay there for as long as he wished."

"Meanwhile the ship managed to reach the sea shore.Gokarna's companions met his parents and narrated the whole incident to him. Gokarna's parents were filled with sorrow at the fate of their son.On the other hand,Gokarna continued to live in that temple for a long period.He was worried about his father as it had been a long time since he saw him.He sent the parrot to bring his news.The parrot flew away to Mathura and met his father-Vasukarn. Vasukarn thanked the parrot for saving his son's life.The parrot then flew back on his return journey and gave the good news to Gokarna."

"One day Gokarna found the divine ladies extremely sad.When asked,they told

him that the king of Ayodhya had destroyed the beautiful gardens of Mathura and this was the reason for their sadness. Gokarna assured them that he would convince the king to abandon his evil plan if he got a chance to meet him.The divine women then provided Gokarna with a divine aircraft boarded on which he reached Mathura.Gokarna met the king and managed to convince him against destroying beautiful gardens.The king was extrtemely impressed by his knowledge and presented great amount of wealth to him.This way all the divine women became happy once again."

"Gokarna then went home and met his family members.His parents and his wives were very pleased to see him.Gokarna then got constructed a shukdev temple to honour his saviour-the learned parrot.It was only because of that parrot that he could acquire such wisdom and knowledge.To express his gratitude to the fowler he donated all the virtues he had acquired by taking bath in the holy confluence(triveni) because had it not been for the fowler he would never have got the knowledgeable parrot.Gokarna lived happily for a long time."

8.8 Installation of Idols

This section contains 5 sections as follows:

8.8.1 Idol Made of Wood

Prithvi requested lord Varah to describe the proper methods of installing various types of idols. Lord Varah replied that a devotee desirous of making a wooden idol must select the wood of 'Bassia latifolia' for his purpose.The wood should be purified and then given shape as per the appearance of the deity.The idol is then installed in a temple amidst the performance of appropriate .During installation ceremony various articles like camphor,vermillion, sandalwood,incense,etc.are offered to the deity.The swastika mark is a sign of auspiciousness so the devotee must keep this in mind while giving shape to the idol.

This swastika mark must be carved out on the idol.Similarly,other signs of lord Vishnu like 'srivatsa' and'kaushtubh' should also be carved out on the idol.Lord Vishnu is then invoked and requested to dwell within that idol by chanting mantras.After the deity has been invoked, the 'wood' no longer remains a lifeless structure but it becomes the embodiment of the deity.The idol is then considered to be fit for worship.While worshipping, a devotee should offer a bhoga of kheer to the deity.Burning a ghee or sesame-oil lamp in front of the deity is considered good.The devotee should then circumambulate around the temple premise.While circumambulating, he should keep on chanting the sacred mantra 'om namo narayanay'.The idol thus installed should be worshipped daily without failure."

8.8.2 Stone Idol

"A proficient sculptor should be chosen to carve out the deity's shape from a pure and spotless stone.First of all the sculptor should clearly draw the outline of deity's appearance on the stone with a marker and then carefully carve it out

from the stone.The idol is then purified by sprinkling 'akshat' on the deity's idol.While worshipping a devotee should burn a ghee lamp and invoke lord Vishnu to dwell in that idol by chanting the sacred mantra-om namo narayanay.The installation of idol being complete,he should observe a fast for the whole night.Next morning,after finishing his daily chores he should put on white clothes and change his old 'yagyopavit' with a new one.The idol thus made is considered fit to be worshipped.Purva-bhadrapad is considered to be the best time for the installation of a stone-idol.During the course of installation ceremony,a devotee should live either on milk or cereal like barley.The rituals of worship consist of numerous activities like lighting four lamps in front of the deity,keeping four small pots each filled up with articles like 'panchagavya',water,sandalwood and milk.The rituals of worship are considered to be incomplete without the chantings of vedic mantras."

8.8.3 Earthen and Copper Idols

"A devotee should carefully make a beautiful earthen idol without any sign of crack.The most auspicious time for the installation of an earthen idol is said to be during 'shravan nakshatra'.An invocation is made to the deity to dwell within the idol after which ablution of the idol is performed with the help of various articles like holy water,panchagavya,sandalwood,etc.The rituals of worship are similar to that of woodden or stone-idol."

"The best time for the installation of copper idol is said to be during 'chitra' nakshatra.The idol should be installed facing north and should be purified with the help of holy water, panchagavya,etc.Then the deity is invoked to dwell within the idol.The invocation is made by chanting sacred mantras.Now,the idol is fit to be worshipped.The rituals are same as mentioned earlier."

8.8.4 Bronze Idol

"The most auspicious time for the installation of bronze-idol is said to be during jyeshtha nakshatra.The idol should be installed facing north.At the time of installation the devotee must not forget to keep four small pots in front of the deity,each filled with articles like'panchgavya''water,sandalwood and honey.The rituals of invocation as well as worship are same as mentioned earlier."

8.8.5 Silver and Gold Idols

"The rituals for the installation of silver or gold idols are similar to that of copper or bronze idol. Prithvi requested lord Varah to reveal the name of deities whom a devotee can worship at home.Lord Vishnu replied-"A devotee can worship any deity at hom e but worship of two shiva lingas is prohibited.Similarly,a devotee should never worship three shaligrams or three durga idols or two surya idols.A devotee should also never worship shaligrams adding up to odd numbers-3,5,7,etc.But,there is no harm in worshipping one shaligram.A devotee must never worship broken or cracked idol because it does not bode well for the worshipper.A 'chakra' mark on the shaligram is considered as very auspicious and it can be worshipped even if the idol is broken or cracked.The virtues attained by worshipping twelve shaligrams are similar to that of worshipping

twelve crore shiva lingas.Partaking of 'charnamrit' that has been offered to shaligram absolves a man from all his sins.But,a devotee should never partake any 'prasad' that has been offered to shiva linga. Anybody who either buys or sells a shaligram is certain to go to hell."

8.9 Rituals Pertaining to Last Rites

This section contains 4 sections as follows:

8.9.1 Last Rites: Pitra Yagya

Prithvi requested lord Varaha to define the meaning of 'Pitra' yagya(rituals pertaining to last rite) and it's significance. Lord Varaha replied-"Sage Nimi was the first person to perform the the rituals of pitra-yagya after the death of his son Aatreya.Sage Aatreya is famous for his penance which he did for ten thousand years.When Aatreya died,his father-Nimi was filled with grief.Nimi tried his best to overcome his sorrow but to no avail.He mourned his son's death for three consecutive nights.He thought that perhaps the performance of 'shraddh' rituals would be the best means to get rid of his sorrow.So,he decided to perform the 'shraddh' rituals on the twelfth day of 'magh'.On that day,he invited many brahmins and fed them with the same delicacies which Aatreya would have liked to eat.He performed all the rituals well within a day which would otherwise have taken a week to perform.He also performed the rituals of 'pinda daan' by donating cereals,vegetables and fruits.While performing the rituals of pinda-daan,he took some kusha grass in his hands and after pointing it towards south chanted Aatreya's name and gotra.In the night,Nimi sat on the seat of deer skin underneath which kusha grass had been spread.He then tried to concentrate on the tip of the nose.But,inspite of all his efforts there was no sign of mental peace he was so desperately seeking and thought of his dead son continued to torment him."

"Nimi was troubled by a guilt that perhaps he had set a bad precedent by performing the rituals of pinda daan because nobody in the past had ever performed the rituals.He was worried as to what would the coming generation think of him.He was so much troubled by the thought that he could not sleep for the whole night.Next morning he got up,still worried.He remained in a disturbed state of mind for many days.At last,when it became too much for him to handle,he decided to end his life.In the meantime,sage Narad arrived there and assured him that there was nothing to be worried about as whatever he had done was most appropriate.Narad also convinced him that even his(Nimi's)dead father would vouch for this fact."

"Nimi remembered his father who had died long ago.His father revealed to him that the rituals which he had performed were in fact the rituals of 'pitra-yagya'.Describing the importance of pitra-yagya Nemi's father told him- 'The name pitra-yagya' was given by none other than lord Brahma himself who was the first one to perform the rituals.Later on,lord Brahma had described the rituals to Narad and this is why Narad was convinced that you had committed no wrong.Nemi's father then described as to what should be done with regard to

the person who lay dying- 'When the death approaches a person looses his consciousness and becomes extremely fearful.At that time,a brahmin should constantly study the scriptures so that he could die in peace.Donating a cow helps to pacify the soul of a dead person.If sacred mantras are whishpered in the ears of a dying person he dies peacefully.When the death seems imminent,a morsel of 'Madhupark'(mixture of curd,water,honey and clarified butter) should be kept in the mouth of the dying person.While doing this one should pray to the almighty to liberate the dead man's soul.' 'The dead body should then be carried and kept under a tree where it is purified by smearing ghee,oil,perfumes,etc.It is then carried to creamation ground and kept at the bank of a river-feet pointing towards south.After this,the dead body should be bathed by remembering all the sacred places of pilgrimage.It should then be kept on the pyre-feet pointing south.The pyre should be lit and the following prayer should be said-O Agnideva!I pray to you to burn all the sins committed by this person so that he attains to heaven.Now,circumambulation around the pyre is made and the pyre is lit towards the head side.'

'After consigning the dead body to flames,the rituals of 'tarpan' and 'pinda-daan' are performed.All the people assembled there should purify themselves before returning home.The period starting from the time the dead body is consigned to flames till the next ten days is called 'Ashaucha'.It is applicable to all the relatives coming from the same gotra of the deceased.'

8.9.2 Last Rites: Ashaucha and Pinda Kalp

'Ashaucha' means impurity,so it is the period during which the son of the deceased is considered to be impure.The period begins from the day on which the death has occured and continues for the following ten days.'Pinda-daan' means offering certain kind of food to the deceased in the belief that it would satiate his soul.

Lord Varah,while describing about the rituals which are supposed to be performed during the period of ashaucha and also the rituals of making pinda daan,told Prithvi-"The observer of shraddh rituals should take his bath in a river on the third day from the day on which death has occured.After taking his bath,he should offer three 'pindas'(consisting of cereal flour) as well as three palmful of water into the river in the name of the deceased.On the fourth,fifth,sixth and seventh days,he should make offerings of one pinda and one palmful of water in the name of the deceased. He should never make offerings of the Pindas at the same place on the contrary he should select diferent spots for this purpose."

"On the tenth day he should get his hair tonsured and change his clothes. His relatives (same-gotra) should take their bath after applying an ointment prepared from sesame seeds, amla and oil on their bodies. 'Ekodishta Shraddh' is performed on the eleventh day. For this ritual to be performed, the concerned person should first purify himself and then offer Pinda to the deceased person as well as other manes. The rituals of Ekodishta Shraddh are same for all the

four castes. The brahmins should be invited and fed on the thirteenth day. While feeding the brahmins a religious vow (Sankalpa) is taken in the name of the deceased person."

"For the purpose of offering 'pinda', an 'altar' should be made at river-bank or any other suitable place. The rituals can be performed either facing south or east. Offering 64 (Pindas) is considered to be ideal. Pinda daan can also be made under a peepal tree but the place should be well protected from the reach of animals like dogs, cock, pigs, etc. It is believed that if these animals visit the place where 'Pinda daan' is being made then it becomes difficult for the soul to attain liberation. The rituals of Pinda daan should be performed at a pure place otherwise there is a fear of soul going to hell. The name and the gotra of the deceased person should be pronounced while performing the rituals. After the rituals are complete all the assembled persons may sit down to have their meal."

Donating things like an umbrella, clothes, cereals, ornaments to the brahmins are believed to be auspicious.

8.9.3 Last Rites: The Flawed Shraddh and its Prevention

Prithvi requested Lord Varaha to describe about the mistakes committed during shraddh rituals and how they could be prevented–

Lord Varah replied—It is a grave sin to partake of a meal meant for the soul of the deceased person. Anybody who has committed this sin should atone for his sin by observing a fast for full day and a night. He also has to perform many other rituals like taking bath in a river flowing eastward, performing tarpan, making offerings of sesame seeds into the fire, Shanti path, Mangal path etc. Partaking of 'Pancha-gavya' (a mixture of cow's milk, cow's urine,cow-dung, curd and charified butter) or 'Madhupark' is also believed to purify such a person."

"Similarly, showing disrespect to the invited brahmins is also considered to be a grave sin. Donating articles to unworthy brahmins is also considered to be an inappropriate act. The performer of Shraddh should refrain from all these acts."

8.9.4 Last Rites: Preparation of ‘Madhupark’

While describing the method of preparing Madhupark, Lord Varaha told Prithvi– "Madhupark" manifested from the right half of my body at the time when the process of creation began. This is the reason why it is so pure. Anybody who makes offering of Madhupark in the course of my worship,attains to my abode. For the preparation of Madhupark honey, curd and ghee are mixed in equal proportion. While preparing it sacred mantras in my praise should be constantly chanted. Giving some Madhupark to a dying man liberates his soul."

8.10 Description of Hell

This section contains 4 sections as follows:

8.10.1 Nachiketa's Experience

Once, Janmejay asked Sage Vaishampayan about Yamrajpuri and it's location. He also wanted to know as to what should a man do so that he does not have to go there.

Sage Vaishampayan narrated the tale of Nachiketa, one of the few blessed persons to have visited yamarajpuri with his mortal body–"Long Long ago, there lived a Sage named Uddyalak. He had a son named Nachiketa. One day, while Uddyalak was performing a'Yagya', Nachiketa arrived there and disturbed him by repeatedly asking-'To whom will you give me?' Sage Uddyalak, in a fit of rage cursed Nachiketa to go to hell. But after he cooled down, he regretted for having cursed his dear son. Nachiketa being an obedient son was ready to go to hell. His father tried his best to convince him against doing this but to no avail. Nachiketa assured his father that he would return safely after visiting Yampuri."

"Thus, Nachiketa went to Yampuri and met Yamaraj—the lord of death. He stayed there for some days and witnessed all the events taking place over there. Ultimately he sought yamaraj's permission to return. When he returned home, his father was extremely delighted to find his son alive. Very soon, the place was thronged by many people and everybody was curious to know about his experiences during his stay in the hell. Nachiketa replied–Sinners like liars, greedy people, jealous people, caluminators, treacherers etc, go to hell. Similarly, one who kills a child or a woman, or kills a brahmin, or one who criticizes the Vedas, or lends money on interest, or one who abandons his parents or faithful wife, or one who ciritizes his guru, or one who sells liquor, or a brahmin who sells Vedas, goes to hell and tastes the fruits of his sinul actions."

"Yamapuri is made of gold and spread in the area of one thousand yojan. It is well fortified and it is impossible for anybody to tresspass its territory. I saw sinners experiencing unbearable torture over there. I also saw couple of rivers flowing there–Pushpodaka, at the bank of which there are trees in abundance and Vaivaswati, which flows through the central part of Yamapuri. Vaivaswati contains divine water which never dries up. Yamapuri has two entrances—one through which only virtuous souls like sages and hermits are allowed to enter and the second through which sinners enter Yamapuri. The former entrance is such that even heat loses its quality in its vicinity. The latter entrance is situated in the south and has a large iron gate. I also saw three large ditches called 'Audoombar', 'Avirchiman' and 'Uchchavach' which are meant for the sinners. Sinners are also forced to pass through the flames that continuously keep on errupting to the west of Yamapuri.

"I saw a grand assembly hall where truthful and virtuous people live. It is graced by the presence of sages like Manu, Vyas, Atri, Gautam, Angira, Bhrigu and others. There, I saw a goddess who is worshipped by Yamaraj. The goddess controls all the functions of the world. I also saw the ferocious Kala. He possesses extreme anger and is very powerful. Time does not have any

influence on him as the result of which he enjoys eternal youth. I also saw various types of demons and giants in the hell."

I saw many messengers of Yamaraj punishing the sinners. Some were beating the sinners with sticks in their hands while some sinners were being forced to enter fire. I saw all the sinner wailing and repenting for their sinful deeds. Many sinners were kept at a very dark place where there was no light. Those who had committed graver sins were put in boiling oil. I saw many sinners being given all sorts of severe punishment. I saw a place where iron nails were spread all around. This was the place where people who breached the modesty of women were given punishment."

"I saw ten different hells–Tapta, Mahatapt, Raurav, etc; Each of the latter is more ferocious than the former. The sinners are sent to all these hells on the basis of the gravity of their sins. Yamaraj himself instructs chitragupta on the punishment to be given to these sinners."

8.10.2 Karma Vipak

Karma Vipak means the fruits one reaps according to his or her Karma. While continuing with the description of various aspects of hell, Nachiketa told the assembled sages–At yamapuri, Chitragupta goes through the record of all the deeds, committed by a man when he was alive and brings into the notice of Yamaraj.

Yamaraj then decides upon the punishment to be given to the concerned soul. The punishment can be varied like if the soul was virtuous then it would be sent to heaven, or the soul may even be made to take birth as a tree, or an animal or any other creature. Sinners like those who had remained disinclined towards any kind of virtuous deed, or those who had abandoned there faithful wives, were sent to the hell named Raurav. The souls of virtuous people were sent to the heaven. Those who had extreme attachment to women took rebirth as human beings. People who had attained martyrdom while fighting a battle were sent to Indrapuri. Those who had engaged themselves in virtuous deeds throughout their lives were rewarded for their good deeds."

8.10.3 Virtues of Chastity

First of all,the area is purified by coating it with cow-dung after which a black deer-skin is spread on it alongwith 'kusha grass'.Two pots-one large and the other a small one are placed side by side.These pots are filled with sugarcane juice and symbolize 'Rasa-Dhenu' and the calf.Four sugarcanes symbolizing the four legs of 'Rasa-Dhenu' are fixed at four corners.After that,one small silver piece is placed at the base of each of the sugarcanes symbolizing hoofs.Rasa-Dhenu is then adorned with colourful cloths and flowers.Again,four small pots filled with sesame seeds are kept at the four corners near Rasa-Dhenu.After the worship is accomplished,Rasa-Dhenu is donated to a brahmin.A person who donates Rasa-Dhenu is liberated from all his sins and all his ancestors as well as the generations to come attain to the Heaven.

8.10.4 Liberation from Sins

Narad asked Yamaraj about the reason why joy was so elusive to human beings. He also wanted to know about the reasons for man's sorrows.

Yamaraj replied—Man's destiny is defined by his own actions. He has to taste the fruits of his actions. He has to taste the fruits of his each and every actions. So when a man finds himself amidst sorrows he must realize that he is reaping the fruits of his past actions. If a man commits virtuous deeds then joy is experienced but sinful deeds invite sorrows and miseries. Desires force a man to take countless birth. A man takes birth on the basis of his past Karmas. God does not interfere in this matter. So, only foolish people curse God for their miseries.They forget that their sorrows are of their own making. A man can liberate himself from sins by engaging in virtuous deeds and abstaining from sinful deeds. A man should perform his duties with a sense of detachment,because attachment results into the transmigration of the soul.

Lord Brahma has declared that 'Shishumar chakra' is the symbolic expression of his own self. Anybody desirous of getting liberated from his sins must make an image of this chakra and worship it. One who visualises this chakra within his body, too, becomes liberated from his sins. Mental worship of various planets (Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Saturn, Mars etc) Visualized at the various points of this chakra helps a man to become liberated from all the sins. Similarly, practising Pranayam for hundred times helps a man to become liberated from all the sins.The most easiest way to become liberated from sins is by engaging oneself in the servitude of a cow. This deed is as virtuous as making pilgrimages to all the sacred places together. Observing fast on Ekadashi also helps a man to become liberated from his sins." Having finished his narrations, Nachiketa, looked at the sages, who were listening with rapt attention. The sages thanked Nachiketa for enlightening them on the sacred place called Yamapuri.

8.11Miscellaneous

This section contains 12 sections as follows:

8.11.1 Gokarneshwar

The famous battle of 'Tarakamaya' had ended. The deities after having defeated the demons had once again regained the control of heaven. Lord Brahma being satisfied with the postive outcome of the war was engrossed in his meditation when Sanat Kumar arrived and asked–"O Lord! I am anxious to know about the origin of three famous Shiva lingas–Uttar-Gokarn, Dakshin-Gokarn and Shringeshwar. What made Lord Shiva to take the form of a deer (Gokarn)? Please enlighten me on all these subjects."

Lord Brahma replied–The northern peak of Mandarachal mountain is famously known as Munjawan. This place is divinely beautiful and the stones and rocks over there glitter like diamonds. It has many rivers, lakes and springs. The

atmosphere overthere is so serene that even the deities are tempted to have their abodes at that place. This sacred place is graced by the presence of 'Sthanu Maheshwar'.

Nandi– the lord of all the Ganas of Shiva, was a virtuous brahmin in treta yuga. Once, he did an austere penance to realize lord Shiva. The penance lasted for one thousand years. At last Lord Shiva became pleased and appeared before him. Lord Shiva blessed Nandi with an appearance similar to him(Shiva).

Lord Shiva said– From today onwards you will be blessed with three eyes just like me. You will be worshipped by the deities and demons alike. You will be immortal and time and age will have no effect upon you. You are being granted with the lordship of all my Ganas. It will be your duty to stand guard at the entrance of my dwelling place.

Lord Shiva then informed Nandi that in a short time the deities would be visiting him(Nandi). Due to some reason Lord Shiva had pledged not to give deities an opportunity to see his physical form. So, after blessing Nandi, Shiva disappeared and went to live in Sleshmatak forest in the form of a deer. Nandi was unaware of this fact.

Meanwhile, after being blessed by Shiva, Nandi had attained a divinely radiant form. When the deities saw Nandi possessing three eyes instead of two, they immediately understood that this could not have happened without the blessing of Lord Shiva.

All the deities arrived at Munjawan peak and requested Nandi to reveal Shiva's whereabouts. Nandi expressed his helplessness and told them that he was not aware where Shiva went after blessing him. He requested the deities to find out Shiva on their own. The deities searched for Shiva in all the three worlds but could not find him. I (Lord Brahma) was also present in the search-team of the deities.I sat down to meditate. In the deep state of meditation, I came to know that Shiva was living in the form of a deer in sleshmatak forest. I revealed this fact to the deities. All the deities then went into the sleshmatak forest and recognised Shiva living in the form of a deer. The deer (Shiva) had one horn on its head. All the deities ran towards the deer with the desire of catching hold of it. Indra held the topmost part of the horn with a firm grip while I (Lord Brahma) held its middle portion. Similarly, Lord Vishnu held the lower part. Very soon, the horn got uprooted because of the force which was being applied on it. Lord Shiva vanished out of our sight. We were left behind with three pieces of horn in our hands. We cursed ourselves for our bad luck. Suddenly, we heard Shiva's voice instructing us to install those pieces of horns at that very place and worship them. The upper part of the horn become famous as Uttar Gokarn, while it's middle portion became famous as Dakshin Gokarn. The part of the horn, which Vishnu installed became famous as 'Shringeshwar'. All these three places have incomparable religious significance and are situated in Nepal. Sleshmatak forest is situated at the distance of 2 miles from the famous

Pashupatinath temple." Sanatkumar thanked Lord Brahma for enlightening him on these secret topics.

8.11.2 The Means of Vishnu Realization

Once, Sage Agastya narrated the following tale to King Bhadrashva— One day, Narad went to Lord Vishnu and asked about the means by which a devotee could realize him. Lord Vishnu replied–Those who worship me by chanting the mantras of either 'Purushsukta' or 'Vaidik Samhita' can certainly realize me. Those who perform oblation according to the rituals of 'Pancharatra' can also have my divine glimpse. But, the rituals of Pancharatra yagya can be performed only by the brahmins. All the rest of the castes can realize me by devotion, chanting my name and making pilgrimage to holy places."Sage Agastya while giving discourse to king Bhadrashwa also predicted that sinners would outnumber the virtuous ones in Kaliyuga and said–"People would abandon their respective 'dharmas' and the caste system would become extinct."

8.11.3 Lord Vishnu – The Almighty God

Once, Sage Agastya had organised a grand yagya in which he had invited all the deities and sages. Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva also went there. Agastya was puzzled as to who was the most superior among all three of them. He asked Lord Shiva in this regard. Lord Shiva replied–One who is worshipped by performing oblation- One who is the source of this universe and into whom it ultimately merges; is none other than Lord Janardhan. So he should be worshipped first of all.

He is the only one who expresses himself in three forms–Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh.Rajoguna is predominant in lord Brahma along with some quantities of Satvaguna and Tamoguna.Lord Brahma has manifested from the naval of Lord Vishnu.Tamoguna is the dominant quality in me(Rudra)with little bit of satva and rajo gunas.Narayan is the embodiment of pure satva guna.In satya yuga,He is worshipped by the means of meditation.During Teta yuga, HE is worshipped by the means of oblation.During Dwapar yuga, HE is pleased by nothing but the rituals of Pancharatra. During Kali yuga, people will worship HIM by various means. Lord Shiva's revelations had completely satisfied Sage Agastya.

8.11.4 Sage Gautam curses the Brahmins

There were many sages present at the yagya organised by Agastya. Some of them asked Lord Shiva as to why he had created some scriptures which appeared so confusing to human beings. Lord Shiva revealed to them that he had done so to protect the brahmins from the curse of Sage Gautam. Then he narrated the incident as it had happened —

During ancient times, Sage Gautam did an austere penance in Dandakaranya forest. Lord Brahma became pleased and gave him some divine seeds capable of producing eternal crops. Gautam then went to Saptashring mountain and made his hermitage there. He sowed the seeds and became pleasantly surprised when he saw rice grains sprouting up withiin few moments. He lived

there happily with his disciples. In course of time, the whole country was struck by famine except the place where Gautam had his hermitage.

One day, few sages arrived at Gautam's hermitage. Gautam treated them with all the respect. These sages enjoyed the hospitality of Gautam and stayed at his hermitage till the famine phase was over. Then they decided to go back to their respective native places. When they sought Gautam's permission,he requested him to stay for few more days. The sages then decided to use deceitful means for taking Gautam's permission. They created a superficial cow with the help of their illussionary powers and left it near the hermitage of Gautam.

Gautam was very pleased to see that cow. He eulogised it by sprinkling water on it. Hardly had he finished his act than the cow died. All those wicked sages arrived there and cursed Gautam for killing an innocent cow. They told him that they could never live along with a person who had killed a cow. Gautam then requested those impostors to tell about the means by which he could become absolved from the heinous sin he had committed. The sages told him that the cow would become alive once Ganga water was sprinkled on its body.

Gautam once again did a tremendous penance to please Lord Shiva. When lord Shiva appeared, he requested him to give a lock of his hair. Lord Shiva agreed to give a lock of his hair to Gautam. Gautam then went to the spot where the cow's body was lying. He sprinkled some water emanating from the hair. The illussionary cow disappeared within a moment and in its place was created a river. Right then, the sapta rishis arrived there and blessed Gautam. Meanwhile, Gautam realized that a wicked prank had been played on him by those wicked sages. He cursed those wicked sages that they would become bereft of the knowledge of Vedas and also that they would no longer be entitled to perform the vedic rituals.

The Sapta rishis requested Gautam to have mercy on those unfortunate brahmins. Gautam then declared that his curse will come true only in Kaliyuga and those brahmins will not be affected by his curse in all the remaining three yugas. The Sapta rishis came to me and informed me about whatever had happened to those unfortunate brahmins. I created 'Shiva Sanhita' from my breath which is similar to Vedas as far as the importance of rituals are concerned. I did this for the benediction of the brahmins. I know that brahmins would fall from grace during Kaliyuga. People would give little respect to the Vedas and create their own scriptures. Confusion would be prevalent and people would discover false religions.

8.11.5 Prakriti and Purush

Once, Lord Shiva while describing about the incident when he had a divine glimpse of Lord Narayan, told Sage Agastya –

'Purusha' is none other than Lord Narayan himself and Prakriti is the medium through which he manifests his powers. I have been fortunate to have a divine

glimpse of this Purush. Lord Brahma after having created me, instructed me to create. But, I did not know how to create. So, I decided to do penance and went into the ocean. In the ocean, I saw an entity who was no more than the size of a thumb. He was purush himself and I immediately recognized him. I started meditating on the form of that almighty–Purush. Suddenly, eleven more entities emerged before me. They were all very radiant and the water had become hot on account of the heat emanating from their bodies. I asked them as to who they were but they did not give any reply and went out of my sight. The next moment, I saw an extremely handsome man. I asked him about his identity and also about the eleven entities whom I had seen few moments ago. Those entities were the eleven Aadityas and had gone to help Lord Brahma in the process of creation. Then he said–I am Narayana–the omnipresent lord. I am blessing you with 'divine vision' so that you can see my divine appearance.'

When I fixed my glance at Narayan I was amazed to see the same thumb-sized Narayana standing before me. But, now He was no longer having the size of a thumb. On the contrary he had expanded his body to such an extent that He appeared like a giant. I also saw Lord Brahma sitting on a lotus flower emanating from his navel. I eulogized HIM with complete devotion. HE blessed me and said–'You are eternal and nothing is beyond your knowledge. You will be worshipped by the deities. I shall take twelve incarnations in the coming eras and shall worship you in each of my incarnation.'

Having said this, Lord Narayana disappeared. This was how I saw the divine form of the 'Purush'–Lord Narayan.

8.11.6 Bhuvan-Kosh and the Islands

All the sages listened with rapt attention to the description Lord Shiva made of the Almighty Narayan. But, they had few more queries in store, so they asked Lord Shiva– "O Lord of Uma! please tell us about the expanse of the Earth- the situation of mountains and the prominent islands."

Lord Shiva replied–"Bhuloka is situated on the surface of the Earth, while the earth itself is based on Almighty's chest. With the desire of creating the three basic gunas—Sat, raj and Tama, the Almighty Narayan created water first of all and went into 'yoganidra'. Then a lotus flower manifested from HIS navel on which was seated Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma then created his manasputras–Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatan and Sanatkumar all of whom were enlightened souls. Then Lord Brahma created sages like Daksha etc. Daksha's daughter Shatarupa was married to Manu from whom she had two sons–Priyavrata and Uttanpad. Priyavrat had ten sons–Aaghnighna, Agnibahu, Medh, Medhatithi, Dhruva, Jyotishman, Dyutiman, Havya, Vayushman and Savan. He had divided the earth into seven islands and presented them to each of his seven sons. Aaghnighna became the king of Jambudweepa whereas Medhatithi, Jyotishman, Dyutiman, Havya, Vayushman and Savan became the rulers of Shakadweepa, Kraunch dweepa, Shalmalidweepa, Gomeddweepa, Plakshdweepa and Pushkar dweepa respectively."

"Savan had two sons–Dhat and Mahaveeti, who were the rulers of 'Dhatki' and 'Kaumud provinces respectively. Similarly Dyutiman had three sons–Kush, Vaidyut and Jeemutvahan. Jyotishman had seven sons–Kushal, Manugavya, Peevar, Andhra, Andhakarak, Muni and Dundubhi. Kush had seven sons–Udbhid, Venuman, Rathapal, Manu, Dhriti, Prabhakar and Papil."

"Medhatithi too had seven sons–Nabhi, Shantmaya, Shishir, Mukhodam, Nandshiva, Kshemak and Dhruv. Nabhi's wife was Merudevi, who had given birth to Rishabh. Rishabh was the father of Bharat upon whom the area lying south of Himalaya mountain is named."

"Sumati was the son of Bharat. Bharat, after appointing Sumati as his successor went into the forest to do penance. The names of some prominent kings coming from the lineage of Sumati were Tej, Satsut, Indradyumna, Parmeshthi, Pratiharta, Nikhat, Unmeta, Abhav-Udgata, Prastota, Vibhu, Prithu, Anant, Gaya, Naya, Virat, Mahavirya and Sudhiman."

"Sudhiman had one hundred sons. This way the population continued to grow. The four yugas–Satya yuga, Treta, dwapar and Kali occur in a cyclic order. Each of the latter follows the former. A manvantar comprises of 71 chaturyugas."

8.11.7 Jambudveepa

Dwelling upon the prominent islands, Lord Shiva told the assembled sages—"Jambudweepa is spread in the area of one lakh yojan and it consists of numerous Janapadads. It is inhabited by 'siddhas' and 'charanas' and is blessed with incomparable natural beauty."

'A total number of nine 'Varshas' lie within the territory of Jambudweepa which itself is surrounded by various oceans on all sides. Towards its east and west lie salt water oceans. Some prominent mountains of Jambudweepa are the Himalaya, the sumeru, the Hemakut and the Nishadh. Territory situated towards east of Sumeru mountain is inhabited by the fair complexioned brahmins. Towards its south live Vaishyas. Shudras live towards the south of Sumeru and the area lying towards its north is inhabited by Kshatriyas."

8.11.8 Shak Dweepa

It's area is approximately twice as compared to Jambudweepa. It is inhabited by virtuous people who are prosperous and who enjoy a long life. They are free from the tortures of old age. This island is covered by oceans on its two sides–Salt water ocean on one side and 'Ksheer Sagar' (Ocean of Milk) on the other.

The mountain ranges lying in the northern part of this island is known as Udayachal while 'Chandragiri is situated in the western part. There are some other mountain ranges like Rajatgiri, Aambikey, etc situated on this island. Altogether these mountain ranges total seven in number and are known as 'Kula-Parvatas'. Some primonent rivers flowing through this island are

Sukumari, Kumari, Nanda, Venika, Dhenu, Ikshumati and Gabhasti. There is a large tree named Shak in the central part of this island. This is how this island derived it's name.

8.11.9 Kusha Dweepa

This island is twice the area of Shak dweepa. There are seven prominent mountain ranges in this island which are known as 'Kula Parvatas'— Kumud, Unnat, Drona, Kank, Isha, Mahish and Mandar. There are seven prominent rivers flowing through the various parts of this island–Pratoya, Shiva, Chitra, Chandra, Vidyullta, Varna and Mahati. This island has got its name from Kusha grass which are found in abundance in its central part.

8.11.10 Krauncha Dweepa

It is twice the area of Kusha dweepa. It has seven prominent mountain ranges–Kraunch, Paavan, Devavrit, Devishtha, Devaanand, Govind and Pundareek. There are also six prominent rivers flowing in this island–Gauri, Kumudwati, Ratri, Manojava, Khyati and Pundarika. Kraunch dweepa is surrounded by an ocean of charified butter (ghee) on all its side.

8.11.11 Shalmali Dweepa

"It is double the area of Kraunch dweepa and covers the 'clarified-butter' ocean from all sides. There are seven prominent mountains as well as seven rivers in this island." This way Lord Shiva disappeared after having finished the narration of all the prominent islands.

8.11.12 Trishakti

Describing the reason behind the manifestation of 'TriShakti' (Three goddesses manifesting from the bodies of Brahma Vishnu and Shiva), Lord Varah told Prithvi— There lived a mighty demon named 'Andhak' who used to torment the deities. After being driven out of the heaven all the deities sought lord Brahma's help. Lord Brahma took them to Lord Shiva and requested him to find some solution to the miseries of the deities. Lord Brahma then meditated on the form of Vishnu who appeared instantly.

The powers emanating from the eyes of all the three deities got combined and resulted into the manifestation of goddess Parmeshwari.On the request of the deities,goddess Parmeshwari created three more goddesses from her body-Brahmi,Vishnupriya and Rudrani.Goddess Brahmi was of fair complexion while Vishnupriya's complexion was wheatish.Goddess Rudrani appeared extremely ferocious in her dark complexion.

Lord Brahma advised goddess Brahmi to do penance at Shwetgiri mountain.Similarly,Vishnupriya went to Mandarachal mountain to do her penance while Lord Shiva advised goddess Rudrani to go to Nilgiri mountain. While Vishnupriya was doing her penance at Mandarachal mountain, crores of goddesses manifested from her body prominent among whom were Vidyutprabha,Chandrakanti,Suryakanti,Gambhira,Vijaya,Jaya,

Jayanti,Aparajita,etc.All these goddesses acted as the escorts of goddess Vishnupriya who is also called Vaishnavi.

One day,sage Narad visited goddess Vaishnavi and was dumbstruck by her divine beauty.He had never seen such a beautiful woman in his life.On his return journey,Narad met Mahishasur-the mighty demon,who had been blessed by Brahma.Mahishasur had conquered all the three worlds.Narad praised the glory of Mahishasur but went on to add that his majesty was incomplete untill he married Vaishnavi.

Narad said-"I have never seen such a beautiful woman in my life. She is worshipped by all the sages,gandharvas,deities as well as other celestial beings.Although,you are worthy of becoming her husband yet the fact is that you can not have her as your wife untill you have conquered the deities and the gandharvas." After sowing a seed of lust in Mahishasur's mind,Narad went away. Mahishasur vowed to marry Vaishnavi at any cost. Lord Varah continued with the tale and said-"After Narad went away,Mahishasur summoned his ministers-Praghas,Vighas,Shanku- karna,Vibhavasu,Vidyunmali,Sumali,Parjanya and Krura.When all the ministers arrived,he requested them to find out means so that he could marry Vaishnavi. Praghas-one of the ministers, was very intelligent.He warned Mahishasur against going ahead with his evil designs and said- 'This illegal abduction could become the cause for your destruction.'Vighas corroborated the statements of Praghas. Finally,everyone agreed that it would be better if Vaishnavi was persuaded to accept Mahishasur as her husband instead of forcefully abducting her.

"So all of them,finally came upon two conclusions-first was to send a messenger to persuade Vaishnavi into marrying Mahishasur and the second was to defeat the deities in a battle.A demon named Vidutprabha was sent to meet goddess Vaishnavi. Mahishasur then launched a fierce attack on the deities and defeated them.The deities were forced to flee the battle-field and seek refuge in brahma loka."

"Meanwhile,Vidutprabha had already reached Mandarachal mountain. Without showing any rspect to goddess Vaishnavi,he tried to impress her by narrating the amazing tale of Mahishasur's birth- 'During ancient times,there lived a sage named Suparshva.Once,he was doing penance and an ogress named Mahishmati alongwith her companions, arrived at his hermitage.Mahishmati was very much impressed by the grandeur of his hermitage and decided to occupy it.She changed her appearance and became a buffalo.She then started tormenting Suparshva,who was initially terrified but finally came to know about her real identity.Suparshva cursed her-'You deserve to remain as a buffalo for the rest of your life.'

"Now,Mahishmati became extremely terrified and begged for being pardoned.Finally,Suparshva took pity on her and said-'You will get liberated from my curse only after you give birth to a calf.' Thus,Mahishmati started

wandering all over the places in the form of a buffalo.Once,while wandering, she reached the bank of river Narmada,where sage Sindhudweep was doing his penance. A significant incident had taken place just few minutes before her arrival-Sage Sindhudweep,being unable to control himself,had ejaculated sperms after infatuated by a beautiful ogress taking bath in river Narmada,which was flowing nearby.The sperms fell on a rock and was eventually washed off by the swift currents of Narmada."

"As Mahishmati was thirsty,she drank water from river Narmada. While quenching her thirst,she also consumed the sperms as the result of which she became pregnant.In course of time,she gave birth to Mahishasur,who grew up to be a mighty demon king.The same Mahishasur wants to marry you." After finishing his story, Vidutprabha waited for Vaishnavi's response.

Goddess Vaishnavi burst into a loud laughter and all the the three worlds became visible to the messenger,through her opened mouth.Vidutprabha was scarred to the hilt as he realized that the woman was extraordinary and divine.

Jaya-a dwarpalika of Vaishnavi,told him-'Our goddess has taken a vow of celibacy,hence your master's wish will remain unfulfilled.' At last,Vidutprabha went back empty handed.In the meantime,Narad arrived there and informed goddess Vaishnavi about the deities's defeat at the hands of Mahishasur and requested her to kill the demon.

Goddess Vaishnavi ordered her escorts to get prepared for the battle. She then proceeded with a huge army to fight against the demons.In the ensuing battle,Mahishasur's army was severely humiliated.Most of the demons were killed and the survivors fled from the battlefield. A demon named Virupaksha informed Mahishasur of the death and destruction caused by goddess Vaishnavi.Mahishasur was infuriated and came forward to fight the goddess.Goddess Vaishnavi was aware of his might,so she manifested her divine form in all her glory. Now,she possessed ten arms and held lethal weapons like a sword, a bow,a shield,a mace,a trident,a chakra,etc.in each of them.She then remembered lord Shiva,who appeared within a moment.Goddess Vaishnavi requested him to be witness to the fierce battle,which was going to take place.

A fierce battle commenced,which lasted for ten thousand divine years.Mahishasur ran helter and skelter,changing his disguise frequently,in order to protect his life but goddess Vaishnavi chased him wherever he went.Ultimately,she killed him at 'Shata- shring' mountain by severing his head.All the deities heaved a sigh of relief and praised the glory of goddess Vaishnavi.

Similarly,goddess Rudrani,who had manifested from lord Shiva and had gone to Nilgiri mountain to do her penance had killed a mighty demon named 'Ruru'. Ruru was a very powerful demon king.He ruled over Ratnapuri, which was

situated in the middle of the ocean.He had become invincible on account of a boon received from lord Brahma.After being defeated by him,all the deities went to seek the help of goddess Rudrani. Goddess Rudrani,who is also known as 'Chamunda' finally killed Ruru-the dreaded demon."

Having completed the tale,lord Varah blessed Prithvi and went back to his abode.

END OF VARAH PURAN

9 Brahma Vaivart Purana

It's the twelfth Purana. It contains four parts- Brahma khand, Prakriti khand, Ganesh khand and Shri Krishna Janma khand.

In Naimisharanya Tirth, addressing a gathering of great sages like Shaunak etc., Sutaji has described this Purana as the marvelous creation. This Purana describes the plays of the Lord Krishna and Radha in considerable detail. Thus, it is a basic source of inspiration for all the subsequent treatises that depict the life of Radha. It is only Purana that exclusively describes the episodes from the life of Radha, the most beloved lady of Lord Shri Krishna.

Brahma khand: Creation of the universe. Origin of Narayana from the body of Shri Krishna. Origin of Radha in Rasamandal. Origin of Gopas, Gopis and cows from the bodies of Radha and Krishna. Creation of all other animate-inanimate world.

Prakriti khand: Greatness of Durga, Radha, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Savitri in the creation of the world. Tales of Savitri-Satyavaan, Surabhi, Swaha and Swadha. Description of the clan of Surath. Tale of Ganga. Tales from Ramayana. Curse of Durvasa on Indra. Worship of Lakshmi.

Ganesh khand: Mainly discusses about the greatness of Lord Ganesh. Also contains tales of Jamadagni, Karteveerya, Parashurama etc.

Shri Krishna khand: Describes the life and plays of Lord Shri Krishna, under the heads of Braj leela, Mathura leela, reunion of Radha and Krishna. Migration of the residents of Gokul to Gokula.

In the opinion of this Purana, there are ten features of Maha Purana. These are: creation, preservation, Pralaya (destruction), fostering, karma, description of lust, description of each of the fourteen Manus and their dynasties. Description of salvation, recitation of the virtues of Shri Hari and description of the glory of the gods. But Puranas with five features and Upa Puranas has following common features: creation, destruction, description of Chandra and Surya dynasties and their kings and description of the fourteen Manus.

This Purana consists of 32 chapters:

9.1 Preliminaries

There was a forest known as naimisharanya.

The sages (maharshis) arranged for a sacrifice (yajna) in this forest and the ceremony went on for twelve years. Naimisharanya forest was a wonderful place to arrange sacrifices in. The climate was pleasant. There were trees full of

climate was pleasant. There were trees full of flowers and fruit. There was no shortage of food in the forest, and animals, birds and sages lived thee happily.

Many sages came to attend the sacrifice that had been arranged in naimisharanya. With them was Romaharshana (alternatively Lomaharshana). Vedavyasa's disciple. Vedavyasa had instructed this disciple of his in the knowledge of the Puranas. The assembled sages worshipped the learned Romaharshana and said, "Please tell us the stories of the Puranas. Who created the universe, who is its preserver and who will destroy it? Please instruct us in all these mysteries".

Romaharshana replied, "Many years ago, Daksha and the other sages had asked Brahma these very questions. I have learnt about Brahma's replies from my guru) teacher) Vedavyasa. I will relate to you what I know".

In the beginning, there was water everywhere and the Brahman (the divine essence) slept on this water in the form of Vishnu. Since water is called nara and since ayana means a bed, Vishnu is known as Narayana.

In the water there emerged a golden egg (anda). Brahma was born inside this egg. Since he created himself, he is called Svayambhu, born (bhu) by himself (svayam). For one whole year, Brahma lived inside the egg. He then split the egg into two and created neaven (svarga) and the earth (prithivi) from the two parts of the egg. Skies, directions, time, language and senses were created in both heaven and earth.

From the powers of his mind, Brahma gave birth to seven great sages. Their names were Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vashishtha. Brahma also created the god Rudra and the sage Sanatkumara.

9.2 More Creation

To continue with the process of creation, Brahma gave birth to a man and a woman from his own body. The man was named Svayambhuva Manu and the woman was named Shatarupa. Humans are descended from Manu. That is the reason they are known as manava. Manu and Shatarupa had three sons named Vira. Priyavrata and Uttanapada.

Uttanapada's son was the great Dhruva. Dhruva performed very difficult meditation (tapasya) for three thousand divine years. Brahma was so pleased at this that he granted Dhruva an eternal place in the sky, near the constellation that is known as saptarshi or the seven sages. This is the constellation Ursa Majoris and Dhruva is the pole Star.

In Dhruva's line there was a king named Prachinavarhi. Prachinavarhi had ten sons, known as the Prachetas. These Prachetas were supposed to look after the world and rule over it, but they were not interested in such mundane matters. They went off instead to perform tapasya under the ocean. The tapasya went on

for ten thousand years. The upshot was that the earth had no ruler and began to suffer. People started to die and thick forests sprouted everywhere. So thick were the forests that even the winds could not blow.

News of this catastrophe reached the Prachetas. They were furious with the trees and created wind (vayu) and fire (agni) from their mouths. The wind dried up the trees and the fire burnt them, so that, very soon, there were very few trees left on earth.

Everyone was alarmed at the effects of the Prachetas anger. The moon-god Soma (or Chandra) came to the Prachetas with a beautiful woman and said, "Prachetas, please control your anger. You need someone to rule over the world so that you can concentrate on your tapasya. This beautiful woman is named Daksha. He will rule over the world".

The Prachetas agreed to this proposal and Daksha was born. The word praja means subject and the word pati means master. Since Daksha ruled over the world and its subjects, Daksha came to be known as Prajapati.

The sages interrupted Romaharshana. They said, "Sage, we are completely confused. We have heard that Daksha was born from Brahma's toe. And yet you have told us that Daksha was the son of the Prachetas. How is this possible?"

Romaharshana replied, "There is no reason for bewilderment. Many Dakshas have been born to rule over the world. One was born from Brahma's toe, yet another was the son of the Prachetas."

9.3 Daksha’s Offspring

Daksha's wife was named Asikli and Asikli gave birth to five thousand sons. They were known as the Haryashvas. The Haryashvas were destined to rule over the world. But the sage Narada went to the Haryashvas and said, "How can you rule over the world if you don't even know what the world looks like? Are you familiar with its geography and its limits? First find out about these things, before you contemplate ruling over the world."

The Haryashvas went off to explore the world and never returned.

Daksha and Asikli then had another thousand sons who were named the Shavalashvas. Narada told them what he had told the Haryashvas and the Shavalashvas also went off to explore the world and never returned.

Daksha and Asikli were distressed that their children should disappear in this manner. Daksha blamed Narada for the instigation and proposed to kill him. But Brahma intervened and persuaded Daksha to control his anger. This Daksha agreed to do, provided that his conditions were met. "Brahma must marry my daughter Priya," he said. "And Narada must be born as Priya's son."

These conditions were accepted.

In fact, Daksha and Asikli had sixty daughters. (Elsewhere, the Brahma Purana mentions fifty daughters.) Ten of these daughters were married to the god Dharma and thirteen to the sage Kashyapa. Twenty-seven daughters were married to Soma or Chandra. The remaining daughters were married to the sages Arishtanemi, Vahuputra, Angirasa and Krishashva.

The ten daughters who were married to the god Dharma were named Arundhati, Vasu, Yami, Lamba, Bhanu, Marutvati, Sankalpa, Muhurta. Sadhya and Vishva. Arundhati's children were the objects (vishaya) of the world. Vasu's children were the eight gods known as the Vasus. Their names were Apa, Dhruva, Soma, Dhara, Salila, Anala, Pratyusha and Prabhasa. Anala's son was Kumara. Because Kumara was brought up by goddesses known as the Krittikas, he came to be called Kartikeya. Prabhasa's son was Vishvakarma. Vishvakarma was skilled in architecture and the making of jewelry. He became the architect of the gods.

Sadhya's children were the gods known as Sadhyadevas and Vishva's children were the gods known as Vishvadervas.

The twenty-seven daughters of Daksha who ere married to Soma are known as the nakshatras (stars).

As you have already been told, Kashyapa married thirteen of Daksha's daughters. Their names were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Arishta, Surasa, Khasa, Surabhi, Vinata. Tamra, Krodhavasha, Ila, Kadru and Muni.

Aditi's sons were the twelve gods known as the adityas. Their names were Vishnu, Shakra. Aryama, Dhata, Vidhata, Tvashta, Pusha, Vivasvana, Savita, Mitravaruna, Amsha and Bhaga.

Diti's sons were the daityas (demons). They were named Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu, and amongst their descendants were several other powerful daityas liked Vali and Vanasura. Diti also had a daughter named Simhika who was married to a danava (demon) named Viprachitti. Their offspring's were terrible demons like Vatapi, Namuchi, Ilvala, Maricha and the nivatakavachas.

The hundred sons of Danu came to be known as danavas. The danavas were thus cousins to the daityas and also to the adityas. In the danava line were born demons like the poulamas and kalakeyas.

Arishta's sons were the gandharvas (singers of heaven).

Surasa gave birth to the snakes (sarpa).

Khasa's children were the yakshas (demi-gods who were the companions of Kubera, the god of wealth) and the rakshasas (demons).

Surabhi's descendants were cows and buffaloes.

Vinata had two sons named Aruna and Garuda. Garuda became the king of the birds.

Tamra has six daughters. From these daughters were born owls, eagles, vultures, crows, water-fowl, horses, camels and donkeys.

Krodhavasha had fourteen thousand children known as nagas (snakes).

Ila gave birth to trees, creepers, shrubs and bushes.

Kadru's sons were also known as nagas or snakes. Among the more important of Kadru's sons were Ananta, Vasuki, Takshaka and Nahusha.

Muni gave birth to the apsaras (dancers of heaven).

Diti's children (daityas) and Auditi's children (adityas) continually fought amongst themselves. On one particular occasion, the gods succeed in killing many of the demons. Thirsting for revenge, Diti began to pray to her husband, Kashyapa that she might given birth to a son who would kill Indra, the king of the gods.

Kashyapa found it difficult to refuse his wife outright. "All right", he said. "You have to bear the son in your womb for a hundred years. And throughout this period, you will have indeed kill Indira. But if you do not observe these instructions to the letter, your desire will not be satisfied."

Diti resolved to do as her husband had bidden her. But Indra had got to know about Diti's resolve and was waiting for an opportunity to save himself. There was an occasion when, tired after her prayers. Diti went to sleep without first washing her feet. This was an unclean act and it gave Indra the required opportunity. He adopted a miniscule form and entered Diti's womb. With his weapon vajra, he sliced up the baby inside the womb into seven parts. The baby naturally began to cry at the pain.

Indra kept on saying, "ma ruda," that is, "don't cry." But the bay, or rather its seven parts, would not listen. Indra thereupon sliced up each of the seven parts into seven more sections, so that there were forty-nine sections in all. When these forty-nine sections were born, they came to known as the Maruts, from the words that Indra had addressed them. Since Diti had not been able to adhere to the conditions her husband had set, the Maruts did not kill Indra. They instead became Indra's followers or companions, and were treated as gods.

9.4 Prithu

In Dhruva's line there was a king named Anga, Anga was religious and followed the righteous path. But unfortunately, Anga's son Vena inherited none of the good qualities of his father. Vena's mother was Sunitha and she happened to be the daughter of Mrityu. Mrityu was notorious for his evil ways and deeds. Vena spent a lot of time with his maternal grandfather and picked up these evil characteristics.

Vena gave up the religion that was laid down in the Vedas and stopped all yajnas. He instructed his subjects that he alone was to be worshiped.

The sages led by Marichi came to Vena to try and persuade him to mend his ways. But Vena was in no mood to listen. He insisted that there was no one equal to him in the whole universe.

The sages realized that Vena was a lost cause. They physically caught hold of Vena and began to knead his right thigh. From this kneading thee emerged a horrible looking creature. It was a dwarf and its complexion, was extremely dark. The sage Atri was so aghast at the dwarf's appearance that he blurted out, "nishida", which means "sit". From this, the dwarf came to be known as nishada. The race of nishadas became hunters and fishermen, and lived in the Vindhya mountains. From them were also descended uncivilized races like tusharas and tunduras.

The evil that was in Vena's body and mind came out with the emergence of the nishada.

When the sages began to knead Vena's right arm, Prithu emerged. He shone like a flaming fire and his energy lit up the four directions. He held a bow in his hand and he was clad in beautiful armour. As soon as Prithu was born, Vena died.

All the rivers and the oceans arrived with their waters and their jewels to anoint Prithu as the king. The gods and the sages also came for the coronation. Brahma himself crowned Prithu the king of the earth. He also took the opportunity to apportion out the lordships of other parts of the universe. Soma was appointed lord over creepers, herbs, starts (nakshatras), planets (grahas), sacrifices, meditation (tapasya) and over the first of the four classes (brahmanas). Varuna became lord of the oceans, Kubera of all the kings, Vishnu of the adityas, Agni of vasus, Daksha of all Prahlada of daityas and danavas, Yama of the pritris (ancestors), Shiva of yakshas, rakshasas and pishachas (ghosts), and Himalaya of the mountains.

The ocean (samudra) was made the lord of all rivers. Chitraratha of gandharvas, Vasuki of nagas, Takshaka of sarpas, Garuda of birds, the tiger of deer, Airavata of elephants, Ucchaihshrava of horses, the bull of cows and the ashvattha tree

(a banyan) of all trees. Brahma also appointed four overlords (dikapalas) for the four directions. To the east there was Sudhanva, to the south Shankhapada, to the west Ketumana and to the north Hiranyaroma.

Prithu was a king who ruled the earth well. During his reign, the earth was laden with foodgrains. The cows were full of milk and the subjects were happy. To glorify King Prithu, the sages performed a sacrifice and from this sacrifice there emerged two races known as the sutas and the magadhas should sing praises in honour of Prithu.

"But what praise will we sing?" asked the sutas and the magadhas. "Prithu is still young. He has not done much that can be praised".

"That may be true," replied the sages. "But he will do wonderous deeds in the future. Sing praises of those wonderful deeds. We will tell you about them."

Having learnt of these future deeds from the sages, the sutas and the magadhas began to compose songs and chant praises in honour of Prithu. These stories were related throughout the earth. Some of Prithu's subjects heard these stories and came to see Prithu. "King," they said. "We have heard of your great deeds. But we find it difficult to make a living. Please indicate to us our habitations on earth. And tell us where we may be able to get the food we need for subsistence."

King Prithu picked up his bow and arrow. He decided to kill the earth, since the earth was not yielding foodgrains to his subjects. The earth adopted the form of a cow and began to flee. But wherever the earth went, Prithu followed with his bow and arrow. He followed the earth to the heaven and to the underworld.

Finally, in desperation, the earth started to pray to Prithu. "King," she said, "please control your anger. I am a woman. Killing me will only mean a sin for you. Besides, what purpose will killing me serve? Your subjects will then be without a place to live in. There must be some other way of ensuring that your subjects can make a living.

The earth then herself offered a solution and King Prithu did her bidding, With his bow, he leveled out the earth. The plains could now be used for villages and cities and for agriculture and animal husbandry. The plains could now be used for villages and cities and for agriculture and animal husbandry. The mountains were gathered together in select places, instead of being littered over whole earth. Earlier, Prithu's subjects had lived off fruits and roots. Now Prithu milked the earth (in her form of a cow) and obtained the seeds of foodgrains on which people could live. Because of Prithu's deeds, the earth came to be known as prithivi.

9.5 Manvataras

A manvantara is an era. There are four smaller eras (yugas) and their names are satya or krita yuga, treta yuga, dvapara yuga and kali yuga. Each cycle of satya yuga, treat yuga, dvapara yuga and kali yuga is called a mahayuga. A mahayuga comprises of 12,000 years of the gods, or equivalently, 4320,000 years for human. 71 mahayugas constitute a manvantara and 14 manvantaras constitute a cycle (kalpa). One kalpa is one of Brahma's days and the universe is destroyed at the end of a Kalpa.

Each manvantara is ruled over by a Manu. In the present kalpa, six manvantaras have already passed and the names of the six Manus who ruled were Svayambhuva, Svarochisha, Uttama, Tamasa, Raivata and Chakshusha. The name of the seventh Manu, who rules over the seventh manvantara of the present kalpa, is Vaivasvata.

The titles of the seven great sages (saptarshi) as well as the tile of Indra change from manvantara to manvantara. The gods also change.

In the present vaivasvata manvantara, the seven great sages are Atri, Vashishtha, Kashyapa, Goutama, Bharadvaja, Vishvamitra and Jamadagni. The gods now are the sadhyas, the rudras, the vishwadevas, the vasus, the maruts, the adityas and the two ashvinis.

There will be seven Manus in the future before the universe is destroyed. Five of these Manus will be known as Savarni Manus. The remaining two will be called Bhoutya and Rouchya.

9.6 The Sun and the Solar Dynasty

You have probably forgotten by now that Kashyapa and Aditi had a son named Vivasvana.

This was the sun god, also known as Surya or Martanda.

Surya was married to Samjna, Vishvakarma's daughter. They had two sons. The fist son was Vaivasvata Manu and the second son was Yama or Shraddhadeva, the god of death. Yama had a twin sister named Yamuna.

The sun's energy was so strong that Samjna could not bear to look at her husband. Through her powers, she created an image from her own body that looked exactly like her. This image was called Chhaya (shadow).

Samjna told Chhaya, "I cannot bear the energy of my husband, I am going off to my father's house. Stay here, pretend to be Samjna and look after my children. Under no circumstances tell anyone, certainly not my husband, that your are not Samjna."

"I will do as you have asked me to," replied Chhaya. "But the moment someone curses me or pulls me by the hair, I shall be forced to reveal the truth."

Samjna went to her father Vishvakarma kept asking her to return to her husband. But this Samjna refused to do. Instead, she went to the land known as Uttara Kuru and started to live there as a mare.

Meanwhile, Surya, who had not realized that Samjna had been replaced by Chhaya, had two sons through Chhaya. They were named Savarni Manu and Shani (Saturn). As soon as her own children were born, Chhaya no longer displayed as much of love for Samjna's children as she used to do. Vaivasvata Manu was a quiet sort of person and he ignored the implied neglect. But Yama was not the tolerant. Besides, he was also younger. He raised his leg to kick Chhaya. At this, Chhaya cursed Yama that his legs would fall off.

Yama went and complained to Surya. " I have not really kicked her," he said. "I only threatened to. And does a mother ever curse her children?"

"I can't undo the curse, " replied Surya. "At best, I can reduce its severity. Your legs will not actually fall off. Some of the flesh from your legs will fall off onto the earth and create worms. Thereby, you will be freed of your curse."

But nevertheless, Surya felt that there was some truth in Yama's asking whether a mother would ever curse her children. He taxed Chhaya with the truth, but Chhaya would not reveal anything Surya then grasped her by the hair and threatened to curse her. Since her conditions were now violated, Chhaya blurted out the truth.

In an extremely angry mood, Surya dashed off to Vishvakarma's house. Vishvakarma tried to cool him down. "it is all because of your exercises energy that this has happened,; exclaimed Vishvakarma. "If you permit, I will shave off some of the extra energy. Then Samjna will be able to look at you."

Surya agreed to this proposition. With the shaved off energy, Vishvakarma manufactured Vishnu's chakra (a weapon like a bladed discus).

Surya found out that Samjna was in Uttara Kuru in the form of a mare. He joined her there in the form of a horse. As horse, they had two sons named Nasatya and Dasra. Since ashva means horse, the sons were also known as the two Ashvinish and became the physicians of the gods.

Surya and Samjna then gave up their equine forms and lived happily ever after.

9.7 Vaivasvata Manu's Children

Vaivasvata Manu has no children and he arranged for a sacrifice so that he might have a son. Nine sons were born as a result of this sacrifice. Their names were Ikshvaku, Nabhaga, Dhrishta, Sharyati, Narishyanta, Pramshu, Rishta,

Karusha and Prishadhra. Manu also made an offering to the two gods Mitra and Varuna. As a result of this offering, a daughter named Ila was born.

Budha was the son of Chandra, and Budha and Ila had a son named Pururva. Subsequently, thanks to a boon conferred on her by Mitra and Varuna. Ila became a man named Sudyumna. Sudyumna's sons were Utkala, Gaya and Vinatashva. Utkala ruled in Orissa, Gaya in the region that is also called Gaya, and Vinatashva in the west.

Sudyumna was not entitled to rule since he had earlier been a woman. He lived in the city known as Pratishthana. Pururava inherited this later on.

When Vaivasvata Manu died, his ten sons divided up the earth amongst themselves, Ikshvaku ruled in the central regions. He had a hundred sons, the eldest of whom was named Vikukshi. Vikukshi came to be known as Shashada. Thereby hangs a tale.

Ikshvaku wanted to organize a sacrifice and he sent his son Vikukshi to the forest to fetch some meat for the sacrifice. While hunting for game, Vikukshi felt very hungry and ate up some of the meat. This was a sacrilege and the sage Vashishtha advised Ikshvaku to banish Vikukshi from his kingdom. Because the meat that he had eaten had been the meat of a rabbit (shashaka), Vikukshi came to be known as Shashada.

But after Ikshvaku died, Vikukshi returned to his father's kingdom and began to rule there. This was the kingdom of Ayodhya. One of Vikukshi's sons was Kakutshta, and Rama of Ramayana fame was born in this line.

9.8 Kubalashva

Kubalashva was one of the kings descended from Kakutstha. Kubalashva's father was named Vrihadashva.

After Vrihadashva had ruled for many years, he desired to retire to the forest. He therefore prepared to hand over the kingdom to his son Kubalashva. But learning of King Vrihadashva's resolve, a sage named Utanka came to meet the king.

"Don't go to the forest right now", Utanka told the king. My hermitage (ashrama) is on the shores of the ocean and is surrounded by sand in all directions. A strong rakshasa named Dhundhu lives under the sand. He is so strong that even the gods have been unable to kill him. Once every year, Dhundhu exhales his breath and this raises a tremendous cloud of sand and dust. For an entire week the sun remains shrouded in dust and for the whole week, there are earthquakes as a result of Dhundhu's exhalation. This is disturbing my mediation (tapasya) and you can't very well go away to the forest without first doing something about Dhundhu. Only you are capable of killing him. I have

accumulated a lot of power as a result of my tapasya and I will give this to you if you kill Dhundhu."

Vrihadashva told Utanka that there was no need for Vrihadashva himself to kill Dhundhu. He would go to the forest as he had decided. His son Kubalashva was perfectly capable of killing Dhundhu and would accompany Utanka.

Kubalashva and his hundred sons went to the shores of the ocean where all the sand was. Kubalashva asked his sons to start digging so that they might find Dhundhu. Dhundhu attacked Kubalashva's sons and killed all of them but three. The three who escaped were named Dridashva, Chandrashva and Kapilashva. But Dhundhu himself was killed by Kubalashva. As a result of this great feat, Kubalashva came to be known as Dhundhumara. The sage Utanka blessed Kubalashva and by the sage's blessings, Kubalashva's dead sons went straight to heaven.

9.9 Trishanku

From Dridashva was descended a king named Trayaruni. Trayaruni was a righteous king and followed all the religious dictates. But Trayarun's son Satyavrata was quite the opposite and refused to follow the righteous path. King Trayaruni's chief priest was the great sage Vashishtha. Vashishtha advised the king that his evil son should be banished from the kingdom. Trayaruni accepted the sage's advice. Consequently, Satyavrata started to live with outcasts (chandalas) outside the kingdom.

After some time, Trayaruni relinquished his kingship and went away to the forest. The kingdom had no king and degenerated into anarchy. The absence of a king is also frowned upon by the gods and for twelve years there was a terrible drought.

Vishvamitra was another great sage. While all this was going on, Vishvamitra was not present in the kingdom. He had gone away to perform tapasya on the shores of the ocean, having left his wife and children in a hermitage (ashrama) that was in the kingdom. But because there was such a long spell of drought, there was also famine in the kingdom. People started to starve. Vishvamitra's wife decided to sell her son so that she might have some food to eat. She tied a rope round the son's neck and took him to the market-place. There, she sold him in exchange for a thousand cows. Since a rope had been tied around the son's neck (gala), he came to be known as Galava.

But Satyavrata discovered what terrible straits Vishvamitra's family was in. He freed Galava and started to take care of Vishvamitra's wife and children.

Satyavrata had not been terribly fond of Vashishtha. He blamed the sage for his banishment. When thee was famine everywhere, Satyavrata stole Vashishtha's cow. He killed the cow and served the meat to Vishvamitra's sons, apart from eating it himself.

Vashishtha was in a terrible rage when he got to know about this incident. He cursed Satyavrata.

"You have committed three sins (shanku)," Vashishtha told Satyavrata. "Firstly, you have angered your father Trayaruni. Secondly, you have stolen and killed a cow. Thirdly, you have eaten beef, a forbidden meat. Because of these three sins, you will henceforth be known as Trishanku and be eternally cursed." (The word tri means three.)

Satyavrata had however taken care of Vishvamitra's family when the sage was away on his meditation. After Vishvamitra returned, he was very happy to learn about what Trishanku had done and offered to grant him a boon. Trishanku desired the boon that he might be allowed to go to heaven in his own physical body. Thanks to Vishvamitra's immense powers, even this virtually impossible task was accomplished. Trishanku became king in Trayaruni's kingdom and Vishvamitra acted as his chief priest.

9.10Sagara

Trishanku's son was Harishchandra and from Harishchandra was descended a king named Bahu. Bahu devoted too much time to pleasurable pursuits. The upshot of this was that the defence of the kingdom was not properly taken care of. Enemy kings seized this opportunity to attack Bahu's kingdom. They drove Bahu out and Bahu went off to the forest with his wife Yadavi,

The enemy kings who dislodged Bahu were led by the Haihaya and Talajangha kings. They were aided by the Shakas, Yavanas, Paradas, Kambojas and Pahlavas.

King Bahu died in the forest. His wife Yadavi desired to die on her husband's funeral pyre. But since Yadavi was pregnant at the time, the sage Ourva persuaded her that such an act would be a sin. He brought Yadavi to his own hermitage and began to take care of her.

Bahu had also a second wife and she had once tried to poison Yadavi. The poison (gara) had however done Yadavi no harm and emerged when the baby was born. Since the baby was born together with poison, he came to known as Sagara.

The sage Ourva took care of Sagara's education. He imparted to Sagara the knowledge of all the shastras and also the usage of weapons. Amongst other things, Sagara acquired the skill of using a divine weapon known as agneyastra.

When he grew up, Sagara attacked the Haihaya kings and defeated them through the use of agneyastra. He then defeated the Shakas, Yavanas, Paradas, Kambojas and Pahlavas and was about to kill them all. But these enemy kings fled to the sage Vashishtha for refuge and Vashishtha persuaded Sagara not to

kill his enemies. Instead, the heads of the Shakas were half shaven off. The Yavanas and Kambojas had their heads completely shaven. The Pahlavas were instructed that they would have to keep beards. These enemy kings also lost all right to follow the religion laid down in the Vedas. Amongst the other kings who Sagara defeated were the Konasarpas, the Mahishakas, the Darvas, the Cholas and the Keralas.

King Sagara had two wives. The first was named Keshini and she was the daughter of the king of Vidarbha. The Brahma Purana does not tell us the name of the second wife but from the Mahabharata we know that it was Sumati. Keshini and Sumati had no sons. They therefore began to pray to Ourva so that they might have sons.

Ourva was pleased at these prayers and said, " Both of you will have sons. But one of you will have a single son and the other will have sixty thousand sons. Tell me, who wants what."

Keshini asked for a single son and Sumati asked for sixty thousand sons. In due course, Keshini gave birth to a son named Panchajana. Sumati gave birth to a gourd. Inside the gourd there was a lump of meat. The gourd was placed inside a pot full of clarified butter (ghrita). And from the lump of meat were born sixty thousand sons.

King Sagara proceeded to conquer the entire earth. As a recognition of this conquest, he initiated an ashvamedha yajna (horse sacrifice). In this ceremony, the sacrificial horse is left free to wander all over the earth. The sixty thousand sons accompanied the horse as its guards. The horse eventually reached the shores of the ocean that lies towards the south-east. While Sagara's sons were resting, the horse was stolen. The sons started to look for the horse and began to dig up the sands in their search. In this process, they came upon the sage Kapila. Kapila had been meditating and his meditation was disturbed by the terrible din that Sagara's sons made. He gazed at them in fury and all but four of the sons were burnt to ashes. The four sons who were saved were named Varhiketu, Suketu, Dharmaketu and Panchajana.

The Brahma Purana is slightly confused here. Was Panchajana Keshini's son or Sumati's son? There is some inconsistency with the account given in the Mahabharata. In the Mahabharata, it is Keshini who gave birth to sixty thousand sons and it is Sumati who had a single son named Asamanja. Also in the Mahabharata, all sixty thousand sons were burnt to ashes.

The Brahma Purana also tells us that the sacrificial horse was obtained by Sagara from the ocean. This is the reason why the ocean is referred to as sagara.

To come back to the account given in the Brahma Purana. Panchajana's son was Amshumana and Amshumana's son was Dilipa. Dilipa had a son named

Bhagiratha. Bhagiratha brought down the river Ganga from heaven to earth and thus redeemed his ancestors who had been burnt to ashes by Kapila. It was because of this that the river Ganga came to be known as Bhagirathi.

From Bhagiratha was descended Raghu. Raghu's son was Aja, Aja's son Dasharatha and Dasharatha's son Rama.

9.11The Moon and the Lunar Dynasty

There was a sage named Atri. Atri performed very difficult tapasya. So difficult was the tapasya that Atri's energy was thrown up into the sky. The sky could not bear this energy and hurled it down onto the earth. This energy then gave birth to Soma or Chandra, the moon god. Brahma took Chandra up into his chariot and drove the chariot around the earth twenty-one times. From whatever energy was left after Chandra has been created, the herbs were born.

Chandra also performed very difficult tapasya. One padma year consists of 10,000,000,000,000 normal years. For one hundred such padma years, Chandra mediated. After the meditation was over, Brahma appointed Chandra lord over seeds, herbs, brahmanas and the oceans. Chandra also performed a rajasuya yajna (royal sacrifice) as a celebration of his lordship. This gave him a lot pomp, glory, wealth and respect.

But all this merely served to turn Chandra's head. The guru (teacher) of the gods was the sage Brihaspati. Brihaspati had a wife named Tara and Chandra abducted Tara. Despite the gods and the sages asking Chandra to return Tara, the moon god would not listen. A terrible war then raged over Tara, the gods fighting for Chandra. Shukracharya, the guru of the demons, fought on Chandra's side and Shiva fought on Brihaspati's side. This war (Samgrama) came to be known as tarakamaya samgrama, since it was fought over Tara.

Finally Brahma intervened and a truce was called. But Chandra and Tara had by then had a son, and Brihaspati refused to accept this son as his own. This son was Budha. As you already known, Budha married Ila and they had a son named Pururava.

The Brahma Purana now describes several kings belonging to the lunar dynasty.

9.12Yayati

In the lunar dynasty, there was born a powerful king named Nahusha. He married Viraja and they had six sons named Yati, Yajati, Samyati, Ayati, Yati, and Suyati. Yati became a hermit. So although Yayati was not the eldest, he was crowned king after Nahusha.

Yayati had two wives. The first was Devayani, daughter of Shukracharya. And the second was Sharmishtha, daughter of Vrishaparva, the king of the danavas. Devayani had two sons named Yadu and Turvasu and Sharmishtha had three sons named Druhya, Anu and Puru. Yayati conquered the whole earth and ruled

over it. When he became old, he divided the earth amongst his five sons. Yadu was given the lands to the east, Puru the lands in the center, Turvasu the lands to the south and south-east, Druhya those to the north and Anu those to the west.

Yayati gave up his weapons and decided to travel throughout the world. He called Yadu to him and said, "I wish to explore the world and my old age is a hindrance. Please accept my old age and give me your youth in return."

Yadu refused. "I will not," he said. "One cannot eat well when one is old, nor can one pleasure the comforts of the world. Old age is not pleasant. Ask one of my brothers instead."

Yadu's refusal angered Yayati. He cursed Yadu that he or his descendants would never be kings. Yayati next requested Druhya, Turvasu and Anu, but they too refused and were similarly cursed by their father. But Puru agreed to his father's request and gladly accepted the old age. He was blessed by his father.

After many years had passed, Yayati got tired of the world and returned Puru's youth to him. He accepted back his old age and retired to the forest to mediate.

From Puru was descended King Bharata after whom the land came to be known as Bharatavarsha. Also in this line was King Kuru, after whom all the descendants came to be known as Kauravas. The sacred place named Kurukshetra owes its name to King Kuru.

From Turvasu were descended the kings of Pandya, Kerala, Kola and Chola.

From Druhya were descended the kings of Gandhara. The horses of the Gandhara kingdom are famous.

Yadu had five sons, Sahasrada, Payoda, Kroshtu, Nila and Anjika. Sahasrada's descendants were the Haihayas, amongst whom the most famous was Kartyavirya Arjuna. Arjuna pleased the sage Dattatreya and became invincible. He also had a thousand arms. Arjuna's greatest deeds were his defeat and imprisonment of Ravana, king of Lanks. Kroshtu's descendants were Vrishni and Andhaka and in the Vrishni line was born Krishna.

9.13 Geography

Having heard accounts of the solar and lunar dynasties, the sages requested Romaharshana. "Tell us a little about the geography of the world. What does the earth look like? What are its limits?"

Romaharshana obliged.

The earth is divided into seven regions (dvipas). Their names are Jambudvipa, Plakshadvipa, Shalmaladvipa, Kushadvipa, Krounchadvipa, Shakadvipa and

Pushkaradvipa. These regions are surrounded by seven oceans and their names are Lavana, Ikshu, Sura, Sarpi, Dadhi, Dugdha and Jala.

Jambudvipa is in the center and right in the middle of Jambudvipa is Mount Sumeru. To the south of Sumeru are the mountains Himavana, Hemakuta and Nishadha and to the north of Sumeru are the mountains Nila, Shveta and Shringi.Jambudvipa itself is divided into several regions (varshas). For example, Sumeru is in the middle of Ilavritavarsha. Braratavarsha is to the south of Sumeru. To the east of Sumeru is Bhadrashvarsha and to the west is Ketumalavarsha. Harivarsha lies to the south and Ramyakavarsha to the north. Still further north is Hiranmayavarsha and beyond that, Uttara Kuruvarsha.

Brahma's city is on the peak of Sumeru. It is there that the river Ganga descends from heaven and gets divided into four tributaries. Sita flows eastwards, Chakshu westwards, Bhadra Northwards and Alakananda southwards into Bharatavarsha.

There are seven major mountain range sin Bharatavarsha and their names are Mahendra, Malya, Sahya, Shuktimana, Riksha, Vindhya and Pariyatra. Bharatavarsha itself is divided into nine regions (dvipas). The names of eight of these regions are Indradvipa, Soumya, Gandharva and Varuna. The ninth region is completely surrounded by the ocean in all directions. To the east of Bharatavarsha live the Kiratas and to the west the Yavanas.

Below the earth lie the seven regions of the underworld (Patala). Their names are Atala, Vitala, Nitala, Sutala, Talatala, Rasatala and Patala. The daityas, danavas and the snakes (sarpa) live there. The underworld is a wonderful place, more beautiful than heaven itself. The sage Narada once went on a trip to the underworld and was bowled over by its beauty. It is full of palaces and jewels. The sun rises there, but does not radiate too much of heat. The moon also rises, but its beams are not at all chilly. The forests are populated by beautiful trees and the ponds are thick with lotus flowers, the songs of cuckoo birds are heard everywhere. Below the underworld sleeps a great snake, known as Shesha or Ananta. It has a thousand hoods, all covered with jewels. In fact, this snake is really Vishnu in one of this various forms.

Also part of the world are hells (naraka), presided over by Yama, the god of death. Those are full of weapons, fire and poisons and sinners are sent there to be punished. Sins that are punished by dispatch to one of the several hells are lying, murder, killing cows, destroying cities, drinking, killing brahmanas, theft, selling wines or hair, criticizing the Vedas, insulting elders, making weapons, selling salt, destroying forests needlessly, killing sheep or deer, cheating and studying under one's own son. Each sinner receives a punishment that is in proportion to the severity of his sin. Of course, if one performs penance (prayashchitta) for one's sins, one need not go to naraka. The best form of penance is praying to Krishna.

The earth (Prithivi or bhuloka) extends upto those arts of the sky that can be lit up by the rays of the sun and the moon. The expanse from there to the solar circle is known as bhuvarloka and holy sages live there. Above the solar circle is the lunar circle and beyond it, in succession, come the regions of Mercury (Budha), Venus (Shukra), Mars (Mangala), Jupiter (Brihaspati), Saturn (Shani), the Great Bear constellation (saptarshi) and the Pole Star (Dhruva). The region from the solar circle to Dhruvaloka is known as heaven (Svarloka or svarga). Beyond Dhruvaloka is Maharloka and further away, Janaloka are Tapaloka and Satyaloka. At the end of a kalpa, all the three lokas (regions) of bhuloka, bhuvarloka and svarloka are destroyed. But the four lokas of Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapaloka and Satyaloka are not destroyed.

9.14Konaraka

There is an ocean to the south of Bharatavarsha. One the shores of this great ocean there is a land named Ondra or Utkala (present Orissa). Utkala is populated by religious people and the brahmanas who live there are learned in the Vedas. They are very good priests, learned in the Puranas and the shastras and skilled in the art of sacrifices. In the land of Utkala, there is an image of the sun (Surya) known as Konaditya. The word aditya also means the sun, as does the word arka. Thus, Konaditya is the same as Konarka, a corruption of the latter word being Konaraka. The image of Konaditys is so wonderful that even if one gazes at the image, all one's sins are forgiven.

All around the temple there is sand. But nevertheless, many trees grow around the temple. The best time to worship the sun there is at the time of sunrise. One has to face the east and draw a lotus flower on the ground with red sandalwood. The lotus flower must have exactly eight petals. A copper vessel has to be placed at the center of the flower and filled with paddy, sesamum water, red sandalwood, red flowers and sacred grass. One prays to Surya to descend on the lotus flower that has thus been drawn. If one worships Konaditya according to these prescribed rites, the sins of seven preceding generations are forgiven.

The twelve adityas are nothing but different forms of Surya. Their names are Indra. Dhata, Parjanya, Tvashta, Pusha Aryama, Bhaga Vivasvana, Vishnu, Amshumana, Varuna, and Mitra. As Indra, Surya destroys the enemies of the gods. As Dhata, he creates living beings. As Parjanya, he showers down rain. As Tvashta, he lives in the trees and herbs. As Pusha, he makes foodgrains grow. As Aryama, he is in the wind. As Bhaga, he is in the body of all living beings. As Vivasvana, he is in fire and helps to cook food. As Vishnu, he destroys the enemies of the gods. As Amshumana, he is again in the wind. As Varuna, Surya is in the waters and as Mitra, he is in the moon and in the oceans.

In each month of the year, it is a different aditya who shines. Indra shines in the month of Ashvina, Dhata in Kartika, Parjanya in Shravana, Tvashta in Falguna, Pusha in Pousha, Aryama in Vaishakha, Bhaga in Magha, Vivasvana in Jyaishtha, Vishnu in Chaitra, Amshumana in Ashada, Varuna, in Bhadra and Mitra in Agrahayana. Vishnu has twelve hundred rays, Aryama one thousand

and three hundred. Vivasvana seventy-two, Amshumana fifteen, Parjanya seventy-two, Varuna one thousand and three hundred, Tvashta one thousand and one hundred, Indra two thousand and two hundred, Dhata eleven hundred, Mitra one thousand and Pusha nine hundred. Apart from the names of the twelve adityas, Surya has twelve other names as well. These are Aditya, Savita, Surya, Mihira, Arka, Prabhakara, Martanda, Bhaskara, Bhanu, Chitrabhanu, Divakara and Ravi.

Brahma once recounted to the sages the one hundred and eight sacred names of Surya. The Brahma Purana lists these names and we reproduce them in nine groups of twelve names each.

(1) Surya, Archana, Bhagavana, Tvashta, Pusha, Arka, Savita, Ravi, Gabhastimana, Aja, Kala, Mrityu.

(2) Dhata, Prabhakara, Prithivi, Jala, Teja, Akasha, Vayu, Parayana, Soma, Brihaspati, Shukra, Budha.

(3) Angaraka, Indra, Vivasvana, Diptamshu, Shuchi, Shouri, Shanaishvara, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Skanda, Vaishravana.

(4) Yama, Vaidyutam jathara, Agni, Aindhana, Tejohpati, Dharmadhvaja, Vedakarta, Vedanga, Vedavahana, Krita, Treta.

(5) Dvapara, Kali, Sarvasurashraya, Kala, Kashtha, Muhurta, Kshapa, Yama, Kshana, Samvatsara, Ashvattha, Kalachakra.

(6) Vibhavasu, Shashvata, Purusha, Yogi, Vyaktavyakta, Sanatana, Kaladhyaksha, Prajadhyaksha, Vishvakaram, Tamonuda, Varuna, Sagara.

(7) Amsha, Jimuta, Jivana, Ariha, Bhutashraya, Bhutapati, Sarvalokanamaskrita, Shrashta, Samvartaka, Vahni, Sarvadi, Alolupa.

(8) Ananta, Kapila, Bhanu, Kamada, Sarvotamukha, Jaya, Vishala, Varada, Sarvabhutasevita, Mana, Suparna, Bhutadi.

(9) Shighraga, Pranadharana, Dhanvantari, Dhumakety, Adideva, Aditinandana, Dvadashatma, Ravi, Daksha, Pita, Mata, Pitamaha.

9.15 Indradyumna and Purushottama Kshetra

In satya yuga there was a king named Indradyumna. He was a very powerful king as Indra himself. He was handsome, honest and truthful, learned in the shastras and the Vedas, and skilled in the use of weapons. His radiance put the sun to shame. Indradyumna was devoted to Vishnu. He once decided that he would worship Vishnu. A tirtha is a sacred place of pilgrimage. Indradyumna scanned all the existing tirthas and cities. But none of them satisfied him. None of them, he felt, was appropriate as a place for worshipping Vishnu.

Indradyumna's own capital was the city of Avanti, in the kingdom of Malva. Avanti was a beautiful and wealthy city, surrounded on all sides by moats and other fortifications. Traders from many countries came there with all sorts or commodities for trading. The roads of the city were lined with shopes. The houses were painted white. The king's stables were full of horses and elephants. All citizens of Avanti were pleasant of appearance and happy. Sacrifices were held fairly often. Many were the temples, groves and ponds in Avanti. Any tree that grew on earth could be found there.

There was a temple to Shiva in the city. This was known as the temple of Mahakala. The image there was so sacred that worshipping Shiva in the temple of Mahakala was tantamount to performing one thousand ashvamedha yajnas.

The river Shipra flowed past Avanti. On the banks of the river there was a temple of Vishnu known as Govindasvami. Another temple to Vishnu was named Vikramasvami,

But Indradyumna was not satisfied with these temples. He wanted to build another temple to Vishnu. He left Avanti to look for a proper place. His soldiers and subjects accompanied their king, so that it looked as if the entire city of Avanti was on the march. After traveling for many days, they arrived on the shores of the southern ocean, the ocean that is known as lavana samudra.

There were so many waves in the ocean that the ocean itself seemed to be dancing. Marine animals lived in the ocean and the waters were also the source of all sorts of jewels. Indradyumna began to live on the shores of the ocean. He discovered a place near the ocean that was thick with flower and fruit trees. Many types of birds gathered there to eat the fruit. This was the place known as Purushottama kshetra (place), the city of Puri of modern times.

Purshottama kshetra was a very important tirtha. But all knowledge of this tirtha had been hidden until Indradyumna arrived on the scene. There was a reason for this. Many years ago, there used to be an image of Vishnu there, where people used to pray. So sacred was the image that all the sins of the worshippers were immediately forgiven. The result was that Yama could not punish any of the sinners. They simply prayed to Vishnu’s image and escaped. Yama therefore prayed to Vishnu for a solution. Vishnu hid the image under the sand so that no one knew that it existed.

Indradyumna liked Purushottama Kshetra. The river Mahanadi or Chitropala flowed not very far away. The people who lived around the place were religious. He decided that this was the right place for building a temple to Vishnu. On an auspicious day, the foundation stone was laid.

Indradyumna then got in touch with the kings of Kalkinga, Utakala and Koshala. He requested their help in fetching stones for the building of the temple. The

kings sent their architects to the Vindhya mountains. The stones were gathered from these mountains and brought to Purushottama Kshetra in boats and chariots. Messengers were also sent to several other kings for aid. They came with their armies and with a lot of wealth.

Indradyumna told the assembled kings, “I wish to accomplish two difficult tasks. The first is to perform an ashvamedha yajna here. And the second is to build a temple to Vishnu. Both of these are difficult jobs, particularly the second. But if you help me, I am confident that both jobs can be done.”

The kings agreed to help. They offered jewels, wealth, gold, clothes, food grains and other objects. The place where the yajna was to be held was made entirely out of gold. In fact, all the objects used in the yajna were made out of gold. Brahmanas from all over Jambudvipa came to witness the sacrifice. They were donated elephants, horses and cows as alms. Never has there been any other sacrifice to rival the one that Indradyumna performed.

After the sacrifice was over and the temple built, there remained the more important question of the image. How was this to be made? Indradyumna began to pray to Vishnu for guidance.

Vishnu appeared before Indradyumna in a dream and said, “Why are you so miserable? When the sun rises, go to the shores of the ocean. There you will find a tree. Half of the tree is in the water and the remaining half in the sand. Chop down this tree. It s wood will give you the material for the image.

In the morning, Indradyumna went to the seashore and found the tree. It was just as Vishnu had described it to be. With an axe, he chopped down the tree. As he was about to slice the trunk in two, two brahmanas appeared before him. Although Indradyumna did not know it, these two brahmanas were Vishnu and Vishvakarma in disguise.

“King. What have you done?” exclaimed the brahmanas. “You have cut down the only tree that was on the shores of the ocean.”

“Forgive me,” replied Indradyumna. “I wished to make an image of Vishnu. Vishnu has instructed me in a dream that this is the tree from which the image should be made.”

“That is an excellent idea,” said the brahmana who was Vishnu in disguise. “There is nothing so holy as praying to Vishnu. Meet my companion. He is as skilled as the great Vishvakarma himself. If you want, he will build the image for you."

King Indradyumna agreed. And instructed by Vishnu, Vishvakarma started to build the image. Or, to be more accurate, there were three different images. The first one was that of Baladeva or Balarama. This was completely white in colour,

except for the eyes, which were red. The image was dressed in blue and a snake held its hood over Balarama's head. A club and a mace were in Balarama's hands. The second image was Krishna's. This was blue in colour, with eyes like lotus flowers. The image was dressed in yellow and had a chakra in its hand. The third image was that of Krishna's sister Subhadra. This image was golden in colour and was dressed in wonderful clothes.

When Indradyumna discovered that the images were made in a matter of minutes, he was thunderstruck. He realised that the two brahmanas cold not be mere mortals. He fell at their feet and said, "Please tell me who you are. You cannot be humans."

Vishnu and Vishvakarma then revealed their true selves and Indradyumna was thrilled. Vishnu blessed the king and told him that he would rule for ten thousand and nine hundred years. And even after Indradyumna died, a place would be reserved for him in heaven.

On an auspicious day, the three images were instated in the temple.

9.16 Markandeya

Many years ago, a great destruction (pralaya) took place. The earth was shrouded in darkness and nothing could be seen. There was neither sun nor moon. Lightning and thunder crushed mountains and trees. There were showers of meteors. Lakes and rivers dried up. The entire earth burnt with fire and the flames of the fire reached down to the underworld. All living beings perished in this fire, including the gods and the demons.

There was a sage named Markandeya. While all this was going on, Markandeya was busy meditating. Such was the power of Markandeya's tapasya that the fire dared not touch him. But it is also true that Markandeya was scared of the fire that raged all around him. He suffered from hunger and thirst and forgot all about his tapasya. His lips and throat dried up from fear. Markandeya discovered that there was a banyan tree that was untouched by all these ravages. He retired to the shade of the banyan tree and started to pray to Vishnu.

Clouds gathered in the sky. They were thick and dark clouds and they spread all over the earth. It started to rain and it poured and poured. Water was everywhere and the earth was flooded. The water put out the fire. It rained continuously for twelve years. The oceans flooded the shores and the mountains were pulverised. Vishnu slept on the water.

Markandeya did not know what to do. There was water everywhere and he floated on it. But he continued to pray to Vishnu.

Vishnu spoke to Markandeya. "Do not be frightened, Markandeya," he said. "You are devoted to me and I shall protect you."

Markandeya did not realise that it was Vishnu who was speaking. “Who dares to address me thus?” he demanded. “Am I a child that I should be so addressed? I am the great Markandeya, blessed by Brahma himself.”

But try as he might, Markandeya cold not see anyone anywhere. Where had the voice come from then? Had it all been an illusion? Not knowing what to do, he started to pray again to Vishnu. Suddenly he saw the banyan tree floating on the water. A golden bed was spread on the branches of the tree and on the bed there slept a small boy. Markandeya was exceedingly surprised to see the small boy floating in the middle of this deluge. He was so confused by his illusions that he did not realise that this boy was none other than Vishnu.

The boy spoke to Markandeya. “You are tired,” said the boy. “You are looking for a refuge. Enter my body and rest for some time.”

Markandeya was so confused that, before he could react, he entered the boy’s body through the mouth. Inside the boy’s stomach Markandeya discovered all the worlds, the seven regions and the seven oceans. The mountains and the kingdoms were all there. So were all living beings.

Markandeya did not know what to make of all this. He started to pray to Vishnu. No sooner than he had started, he came out of the boy’s mouth. Vishnu now appeared before him and blessed him. The sage spent a thousand years with Vishnu. Vishnu then asked, “I wish to grant you a boon. What is your desire?”

“I want to build a temple to Shiva in Purushottama Kshetra,” replied Markandeya. “This will prove to everyone that Vishnu and Shiva are really one and the same.”

Vishnu granted the boon and Markandeya built a temple to Shiva known as Bhuvaneshvara (Lord of the World).

9.17 King Shveta

In satya yuga there used to be a king named Shveta. He was such a good king that during his reign people lived for ten thousand years. No one dies as a child. Longevity was high and there was no infant mortality.

But there was a sage named Kapalagoutama. Unfortunately, the sage’s son died as an infant. The sage brought the dead body to Shveta and the king resolved that if he could not bring the sage’s son back to life within a week, he would immolate himself in a fire. Having thus taken an oath, king Shveta worshipped Shiva with one thousand and one hundred blue lotus flowers. Shiva appeared before the king and granted the boon that the infant son might be brought back to life.

King Shveta ruled for a thousand years. He also built a temple to Vishnu in Purushottama kshetra. The temple that had been built by Indradyumna was known as the temple of Jagannatha. Shveta's temple was not very far from this and was known as the temple of Shvetamadhava. The image in this temple was as white as the moon.

9.18Vali

There was a king of the daityas named Vali. He was powerful and invincible. He was also righteous and truthful. The gods cold not bear to see Vali's prosperity and began to plot how Vali might be foiled. So well did Vali rule that disease, drought and evil disappeared throughout the three worlds.

In desperation, the gods approached Vishnu. "Please do something about Vali", they requested. "You always help us out when we are in trouble."

"There is no difference between Vali and the gods so far as I am concerned," replied Vishnu "Vali is devoted to me. I cannot therefore fight with him. But I will think of a way so that his kingdom might be taken away from him and given to you."

Vishnu decided to be born as Aditi's son. The son was a dwarf. This was the vamana avatara (dwarf incarnation) of Vishnu.

Vali proposed to organise a horse sacrifice. Many sages came to the sacrifice and Shukracharya was the chief priest. The dwarf also arrived to witness the yajna.

Shukracharya realised that the dwarf was none other than Vishnu. He told Vali, "I suspect that this dwarf is Vishnu in disguise. He must have come here to ask you for something. Please do not grant him anything without first consulting me."

"Certainly not," replied Vali. "It is good fortune indeed that the great Vishnu has come to my house. What is there to consult about? I shall grant Vishnu whatever he wants."

Vali went to the dwarf to ascertain what the dwarf wanted. Vishnu expressed the wish that he might be given as much of land as might be covered in three of the dwarf's steps. This boon Vali readily granted. But no sooner than the boon had been granted, the dwarf adopted a gigantic form. He placed one foot on Vali's yajna and the second on Brahmaloka.

"Where will I place my third step?" demanded Vishnu. "There is no more space left in the entire universe. Find me a place for my third step."

Vali smiled and said, "Place it on my back."

Vishnu was charmed at Vali's generosity. He granted Vali the boon that Vali would hold the title of Indra in a future manvantara. He then appointed Vali king of the underworld. But Indra's kingdom of heaven, which Vali had conquered, was returned to Indra.

Brahma had all this while been in Brahmaloka. When Vishnu placed his second foot on Brahmaloka, Brahma felt that he should welcome his water-pot (kamandalu) to wash the foot. The water spilled over from the foot and fell on the mountains. There the water divided into four. Vishnu accepted the flow that went northwards. The flow that went westwards returned to Brahma's kamandalu. The flow that went eastwards was gathered up by the gods and the sages. But the flow that went southwards got entangled in Shiva's matted hair. This water was the river Ganga.

9.19Gautama

Part of the water of the Ganga that got stuck in Shiva's hair was brought down to earth by Bhagiratha. The remaining part was brought down by the sage Gautama.

Parvati was married to Shiva, but Shiva seemed to be fonder of Ganga than of Parvati. Parvati resolved that a way had to be found to remove Ganga from Shiva's hair. She tried persuasion, but Shiva refused to listen.

At this time, there was a terrible drought on earth which went on for fourteen years. The only place that was not affected by the drought was the sage Gouthama's hermitage. Other people also gathered in the hermitage to save themselves from the drought and Goutama welcomed them all. Ganesha thought that he might be able to devise a way to free his mother of the Ganga problem. He went and began to live in Gouthama's hermitage.

Ganesha cultivated the acquaintance of the other sages and become quite friendly with them.

One of Parvati's companions was Jaya. Ganesha told Jaya that she was to adopt the form of a cow and eat up the grain in Goutama's fields. And the moment she was struck, she was to lie down on the ground and pretend to be dead.

Goutama noticed that a cow was eating up his grain. He tried to drive away the cow by striking it with a blade of grass. As soon as he did this, the cow uttered a shrill bellow and fell down on the ground. Ganesha and the other sages came running to see what had happened. They discovered that, to all intents and purposes, a cow had been struck down dead by sage Goutama. They therefore refused to stay in an ashrama where such a sin had been committed.

Goutama tried to restrain them. "Please do not go away and forsake me," he said. "Tell me how I may performed penance."

"You will have to bring down Ganga from Shiva's hair," replied Ganesh. "When that water touches the dead body of the cow, your sin will be forgiven."

"You will have to bring down Ganga from Shiva's hair," replied Ganesha. "When that water touches the dead body of the cow, your sin will be forgiven."

Ganesha was so friendly with the other sages that they all accepted his solution. Goutama also agreed to do the needful.

Accordingly, Goutama went to Mount Kailasa and began to pray to Shiva. Shiva was pleased at Goutama's tapasya and offered to grant a boon. Goutama naturally wanted the boon that Ganga might be brought down to earth. Shiva agreed. It was thus that Ganga was brought down to earth by the sage Goutama. Ganga has four tributaries in heaven, seven on earth and four in the underworld. Since it was Goutama who brought Ganga down to earth, the river is also known as Goutami Ganga.

9.20The Doves

In a mountain known as Brahmagiri there used to live a hunter who was very cruel. He not only killed birds and animals, but brahmanas and sages as well.

The hunter once went on a hunt. He killed many animals and birds and some he put in his cages. He had penetrated so far inside the forest that he was far from home. It became night and also started to rain. Hungry and thirsty, the hunter lost his way. He climbed up a tree and decided to spend the night there. But his mind kept going back to his wife and children at home.

For many years a dove and its family had lived happily on that tree. Both the male and female had gone out to look for food. But although the make dove had returned to the nest, the female dove had not. In fact, the female had been captured by the hunter and was now inside a cage.

The male did not know this. He mourned for his wife.

These words of mourning were heard by the female dove inside the cage and she made her presence felt. The male dove came down and discovered his wife inside the cage. "The hunter is sleeping now," he said. "Now is the time for me to free you."

"No," replied the female dove. "You know how it is with living beings. One living being lives on another. I can find not fault with the hunter, he is merely collecting his food. He is like a guest to us. And it is our duty to offer up our bodies for the sake of a guest."

"You are quite right," said the male dove. "I lost my sense of propriety. We have to serve our guest. But how do we serve our guest? We have nothing that we can call our own."

"At the moment the hunter is suffering most from the cold," replied the female dove. "We have to light a fire to warm him up. Go and find a fire and bring plenty of dead leaves and branches so that the fire may burn."

The male dove found a flaming branch. He also brought many dry leaves and branches so that the fire could burn. The rain had stopped and the fire warmed up the hunter.

"Now," said the female dove, "free me so that I may immolate myself in the fire. My roasted flesh will serve as food for the hunter."

"Never," replied the male dove. "It is my right to serve the guest first."

Saying this, the male dove hurled himself into the fire. The hunter had heard the entire conversation and marveled that two doves could be so altruistic. The female dove now requested the hunter to free her from the cage. And as soon as he did this, the female dove also hurled herself into the fire.

This selfless deed of the two doves was so wonderful that a space vehicle (vimana) came down to take the two doves straight to heaven. The cruel hunter was also impressed and repented his past misdeeds. He told the doves, "You are indeed blessed. Before you go to heaven, please tell me how I may perform penance for my sins."

"Go to Goutami Ganga and bathe there for fifteen days," replied the doves. "Your sins will also be forgiven."

The hunter did as he had been asked to. The place where the doves immolated themselves became a holy tirtha known as kapotatirtha, since the word kapota means dove.

9.21Garuda and Maninaga

You have already been told about the great snake (naga) Ananta. Ananta had a son named Maninaga. Garuda was the enemy of the snakes and the snakes were all afraid of Garuda.

Maninaga began to pray to Shiva. Having pleased Shiva, he obtained the boon that Garuda would be able to do him no harm. Armed with this boon, Maninaga started to wander around freely and did not run away even when faced with Garuda. Garuda found this to be exceedingly strange. Although he could not kill Maninaga, he captured him and kept him imprisoned in his own house.

Shiva had a companion named Nandi. Nandi told Shiva, "Lord, what has happened to Maninaga? We have not seen him for some time. I hope that Garuda has not done him some harm."

Shiva of curse knew what had happened. He advised Nandi to pray to Vishnu. Nandi was to please Vishnu and then ask for the boon that Maninaga might be freed from Garuda's imprisonment. Nandi did this and Vishnu asked Garuda to release Maninaga.

"Lord," Garuda told Vishnu," this is very unfair. Other masters treat their servants really well. They give their servants gifts. See how Shiva has sent Nandi himself to rescue Shiva's devotee Maninaga. You never give me any gifts. Moreover, when I obtain something on my own, you ask me to relinquish it. Is this proper on your part? It is on me that you ride when you go out to fight the demons. They get defeated because of my prowess. And yet it tickles your ego no end to think that you have defeated them yourself."

Vishnu smiled and replied, "Garuda, you are quite right. You have become thin and learn from bearing my weight. It is quite true that I can defeat the demons only because of your prowess. You have a lot of strength. Why don't you bear the weight of my little finger and demonstrate your strength?"

Vishnu placed his little finger on Garuda's head. So heavy was the finger that Garuda was crushed against the ground.

"Please forgive me," said Garuda. "I have been very stupid. I am an ignorant ass and you are the lord of everything. I have been completely flattened by the weight of your little finger. Please tell me how I may regain my old self."

Vishnu asked Nandi to take Garuda to Shiva. Shiva would find a way of restoring Grauda's old appearance. Maninaga was releases and Nandi took Garuda to Shiva. Shiva asked Garuda to bathe in Goutami Ganga. This would make his appearance normal again.

Garuda did this. Not only was his old appearance restored, he became stronger and swifter than he used to be. The place where Garuda bathed is a tirtha known as Garudatirtha.

9.22 Vishvamitra and Indra

Many years ago, there was a terrible drought. There was no food to be had.

The sage Vishvamitra had come to the banks of the river Goutami Ganga with his disciples. Vishvamitra's wife, children and disciples were all hungry. The sage therefore sent his disciples out to look for food. They searched everywhere, but could find no food. The only object that they could find was the body of a dead dog. They brought this to Vishvamitra.

"We have no choice," Vishvamitra told his disciples. "Clean the meat carefully with water. Then offer it to the gods, the sages and the ancestors. This is what we have to live on."

Offering the meat of a dog to the gods was unheard of. Indra adopted the form of a hawk and stole the vessel in which the meat was kept. But Vishvamitra got to know about this and got ready to curse Indra. Indra was naturally scared of Vishvamitra's curse. He changed the dog-meat into amrita (a heavenly drink) and brought the vessel back.

"I don't want amrita," Vishvamitra told Indra. "Bring the dog-meat back. I don't want to have amrita when the whole world is starving for food. There is no food available and I do not see any sin in eating dog-meat. Nor should there be a sin in offering it to the gods."

Indra was the god of rains. He realised that the only way to persuade Vishvamitra against eating the dog-meat was to make it rain so that there would be an end to the drought. Instructed by Indra, the clouds poured down rain. Vishvamitra and his disciples now consented to partake of the amrita.

The place where all this happened has come to be known as Vishvamitratirtha.

9.23Shveta

There used to be a brahmana named Shveta. He was a friend of the sage Goutama and had a hermitage on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. Shveta was also devoted to Shiva. In due course, Shiveta died and Yama's messengers arrived to take Shveta to Yama. But they could not even enter Shveta's house.

Finding that Yama's messengers are not returning, Yama's companion Chitraka told Yama, "What do you think has happened? Why aren't the messengers returning?

Yama now sent his companion Mrityu (literally death) to find out what was going on. Mrityu went to Shveta's house and found Yama's messengers standing outside the house. They explained that they were unable to enter the house because Shiva himself was guarding Shveta's body.

One of Shiva's companions asked Mrityu. "What are you doing here? What do you want?"

"I have come to take Shveta to Yama," replied Mrityu. "His time on earth is up."

Mrityu flung a noose to grasp Shveta's body. But Shiva's companion struck Mrityu with a rod and killed him. When the news of this was taken to Yama, he was furious. With all his companions he attacked Shveta's house. Nandi, Ganesha, Kartikeya and several of Shiva's companions came to fight on Shiva's side, and a battle royal raged. All the gods arrived to mediate and end the strife. Things had a got a bit out of hand and Yama himself had been killed by Kartikeya.

The problem seemed to defy solution. Yama was, after all, performing his duty. But Shiva insisted that his devotees would never be taken to Yama, but would instead go straight to heaven. Shiva's condition was finally agreed to. Nandi brought water from the Goutami Ganga and sprinkled it on Yama and the others who had died in the fighting. They were all immediately brought back to life.

9.24 Kubera

Kubera was the eldest son of the sage Vishrava. Vishrava had two wives. The fist wife give birth to Kubera. The second wife was a rakshasa (demon) woman and gave birth to Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. Kubera used to rule in Lanka and his relations with his cousins were extremely good. But Ravana's mother did not like idea of her sons mixing so much with Kubera.

She called her sons and said, "What are you up to? Why do you cause me so much of pain? You are demons and Kubera is a god. Is it proper that you should be so friendly with him? The relation between gods and demons is one of enmity. Consider Kubera's pomp and glory. Have you got anything like that to show for yourselves? Do something so as to improve your own statures."

Thus instructed by their mother, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana went off to the forest to perform tapasya. They pleased Brahma with their prayers and desired the boon that they might win over the kingdom of Lanka. Ravana also obtained the boon that he would become very strong.

Thus fortified with the boons, the demons attacked Kubera and defeated him. They drove Kubera out of Lanka. Kubera possessed a beautiful vimana named pushpaka. This was also appropriated by Ravana. Ravana also made it known that whoever gave Kubera refuge would be killed by him. This meant that no one dared give refuge to Kubera.

Kubera sought the advice of his grandfather Pulastya. Pulastya told him to go to the banks of the Goutami Ganga and pray to Shiva there. Shiva appeared before Kubera and blessed him. He granted Kubera the boon that Kubera would become the god of all wealth.

9.25 Harishchandra

In the Ikshvaku dynasty there ruled a king named Harishchandra. Harishchandra had no son. One day two sages named Narada and Parvata came to visit Harishchandra and told him that he would go to hell if he did not have a son.

"How can I obtain a son?" asked Harishchandra.

"Go to the banks of the Goutami Ganga," advised the sages. "Pray to the god Varuna there. We are sure that Varuna will grant you a son."

Harishchandra pleased Varuna with his prayers and asked for a son.

“You will have a son,” said Varuna. “But there is a condition attached. You will have to subsequently organise a yajna in my honour and you will have to sacrifice your son at this yajna. Tell me if this condition is acceptable to you.”

“Yes indeed,” replied Harishchandra.

In due course, Harishchandra had a son who was named Rohita.

Varuna came to Harishchandra and asked, “What about the yajna in my honour?”

“My son is still too young,” replied Harishchandra. “Let him at least attain ten days of age. Till then, the baby is in any case impure and is not fit to be sacrificed.”

After ten days Varuna came again and asked, “What about the yajna in my honour?

“Please let him grow his teeth,” replied Harishchandra. “Animals are sacrificed at yajnas. And no one becomes an animal until he actually has teeth.”

Varuna waited till the teeth grew and returned when Rohita was seven years of age. “What about the yajna in my honour?” he asked.

“These are only milk teeth,” replied Harishchandra. “These do not characterise an animal. Please wait until his proper teeth have grown.”

Varuna returned when the proper teeth grew and asked, “What about the yajna in my honour?”

“He is the son of kshatriya (the second of the four classes, a warrior class),” replied Harishchandra. “But his training in the art of fighting has not even begun. He cannot be called a kshatriya until he knows how to fight. Till that day he is an incomplete man. Do you really want such an incomplete man as a sacrifice?”

After some years had passed, Rohita became skilled in the art of fighting and was appointed the heir-apparent (yuvaraja) to the kingdom. He was then sixteen years of age.

Varuna appeared again and asked, “What about the yajna in my honour?”

This time the entire conversation took place in front of the prince and Rohita intervened before Harishchandra could say anything. “Father,” he said, “I have

already resolved to perform a yajna in Vishnu's honour. Grant me the permission to complete that first. After that, do what you will."

Rohita went off to the forest. Meanwhile, Varuna had had enough and he afflicted Harishchandra with a painful stomach ailment. News of his father's illness was taken to Rohita in the forest. In the forest, Rohita met a sage named Ajigarta. The sage was very poor and, together with his wife and three sons, was starving.

"Will you sell one of your three sons to me?" asked Rohita. "The boy is needed for a sacrifice."

"I shall not sell my eldest son," said the sage. "My wife will not permit the youngest one to be sold. You can have the one in the middle. His name is Shunahshefa. The price will be one thousand cows, one thousand golden coins, one thousand pieces of clothing and a lot of wealth."

Rohita paid the price and brought Shunahshefa home to Harishchandra.

"We can't do this," said Harishchandra. "It is the duty of kings to protect the brahmanas. How can we sacrifice the son of a brahmana? It is better to die instead. Go and return Shunahshefa to his father."

Just then a divine voice was heard from heaven. The voice said, "There is no need for anyone to die. Take Shunahshefa to the banks of the Goutami Ganga and perform the yajna to Varuna there. Goutami Ganga is such a sacred river that no human sacrifices are needed if a yajna is performed there.

This is what Harishchandra did not Varuna was satisfied. As for Shunahshefa, he was adopted by the sage Vishvamitra as a son.

9.26Vriddhagoutama

The sage Goutama had a son named Vriddhagoutama. Vriddhagoutama was also a sage. But he was very ugly. Besides, he had no nose; had never had one since he had been born. He was so ashamed of this deformity that he could not bear to join the other children of the sages in studying the Vedas and Shastras under a teacher. But Vriddhagoutama knew some incantations (mantras) which he always chanted. He also worshipped the god Agni.

When he grew a bit older, Vriddhagoutama went out to tour the world. He traveled to many places and met many people. Since he was deformed, he never got married. Who would want to marry a person so ugly as he?

In the course of his travels, Vriddhagoutama arrived at a mountain named Shitagiri. He discovered a beautiful cave in the mountain and thought that this might be a good place to live in. So he entered the cave and was very surprised to find an old woman inside. The old woman had obviously been living inside the

cave for many years. Her body was thin and wasted from the rigours of severe tapasya.

Vriddhagoutama was about to touch the feet of such a venerable old woman, but the woman restrained him. “Please don’t touch my feet,” said the woman. “You are my guru. Does a guru ever bow before his disciple?”

Vriddagoutama was surprised at these words. This was the first time in his life that he had met the old woman. “How can I be your guru?”, he asked. “You are much older than me. Besides, I have never learnt anything and you are clearly a respected ascetic. Your words are a complete mystery to me.”

“Let me tell you my story,” said the old woman. “Otherwise, you will not understand.”

There used to be a handsome and brave prince named Ritadhvaja. He was the son of King Arshtishena. Ritadhvaja went on a hunt to the forest and arrived at that very cave. There he happened to meet an apsara named Sushyama. The two fell in love with each other and got married. But eventually, Ritadhvaja had to return home and Sushyama gave birth to a daughter there. Sushyama left her daughter in the cave itself with the instruction that she was not to leave the cave. The first man to enter the cave would become her husband. It was this daughter who had now become the old woman. Ritadhvaja had reigned for eighty thousand years. After that, ritadhvaja’s son had reigned for ten thousand years. All this while, Sushyama’s daughter had lived in the cave, that is, for ninety thousand years all together.

“Now you see that you are to be my husband,” said the old woman. “Is a husband not a guru?”

“What you say is quite impossible,” replied Vriddhagoutama. “You are much older than me. I am only a thousand years old and you more than ninety thousand. How can we marry? I am like a child next to you.”

“If you do not marry me, I will kill myself,” said the old woman.

“But I am ugly,” protested Vriddhagoutama. “I will promise you this much. If I every become handsome and learned, I will indeed marry you.”

“I have pleased the goddess Sarasvati, who presides over all learning, through my tapasya,” said the old woman. “She will make you learned. I have also pleased the god Varuna and he will make you handsome.”

Vriddhagoutama became handsome and learned and married the old woman. They lived happily in the cave.

One day, various sages came to visit the couple. Amongst them there were sages like Vashishtha and Vamadeva. But there were also young sages who ere not all that sensible. The younger sages started to laugh at the sight of the young and handsome Vriddhagoutama and his aged wife.

“Who is this man?” they asked the old woman. “Is he your son or your grandson?”

The sages went away, but the couple felt ashamed. They asked the sage Agastya what they might do. Agastya told them to go and bathe in the river Goutami Ganga. The river is so sacred that all one’s heart’s desires are thereby granted. The couple did this and prayed to Vishnu and Shiva. Wonder of wonders, the old woman became young and pretty. The place on the banks of the river where these wonderful things happened is a tirtha named vriddhasangama.

9.27 Pippalada

Many years ago, there used to be a sage named Dadhici. His wife was Lopamudra. Dadhichi’s hermitage was right next to the holy river Ganga. Lopamudra’s sister Gabhastini also used to live in the hermitage. Such was the sage Dadhichi’s powers that daityas and danavas dared not set foot inside the hermitage.

The gods once fought with the demons and managed to defeat them. After the war was over, they came to pay their respects to Dadhichi. Dadhichi welcomed his guests and wanted to know how they were faring.

“Thanks to your blessings, we are fine,” replied the gods. “We have just defeated the demons in a war. In fact, we have a slight problem. We no longer need our weapons now that the demons have run away. We don’t know of a safe place where we can store all these weapons. We were wondering if we might keep the weapons in your ashrama. This is one of the safest places that can be found.”

Dadhichi consented to this proposal. The gods left their weapons in the hermitage and went back to heaven.

When Lopamudra heard what Dadhichi had done, she was not at all pleased. “You have done something that is mot improper,” she told her husband. “One should never accept responsibility for someone else’s property, especially if one is an ascetic and has not material possessions of one’s own. Moreover, you have agreed to store the weapons of the gods. Dose this not mean that those who are the god’s enemies will look upon you too as an enemy? And what are you going to do if something should happen to the weapons? Will the gods not blame you then?”

“Your points are well taken,” said Dadhichi. “But I had not thought of them and I have given the gods my word. I can’t very well go back on my word now.”

A hundred years passed. The gods did not return to collect their weapons. The weapons began to lose their luster, Dadhichi did not know how the energy of the weapons might be preserved. He washed them with holy water and the energy of the weapons got dissolve in the water. Dadhichi then drank up the water. As for the weapons themselves, they faded away once their energy was gone.

Finally the gods came to claim their weapons. “Can we have our weapons back? They asked.

“Our enemies have become powerful again. We need our weapons.”

“That may be,” said Dadhichi. “But the weapons are no longer there. I have swallowed up their energy. Let me tell you what can be done. I will use the powers of meditation (yoga) to give up my life. Then excellent weapons can be made out of my bones.

The gods were reluctant, but thee was no other solution. Dadhichi died and the gods requested Vishvakarma to make weapons for them out of Dadhichi’s bones. Vishvakarma complied and the weapon name vajra that he made was truly remarkable.

Lopamudra was away when this incident took place. She returned and found that her husband had died. She was afflicted with sorrow and wished to immolate herself in a fire. But she happened to be pregnant at the time, so that this could not immediately be done. Once the baby was born, she killed herself after having handed over the baby to a pippala (fig) tree for rearing.

Since the pippala tree brought up the boy, he came to be known as Pippalada. Chandra was the lord over all trees. The trees asked Chandra for some amrita for Pippalada and Chandra obliged. The amrita gave Pippalada a lot of strength.

When Pippalada grew up, he wanted to know who his parents were and the trees told him the story. Pippalada blamed the gods for his parents death and decided to seek revenge. The trees brought Pippalada to Chandra.

“You are still too young,” said Chandra. “First you must become learned and well-versed in the use of weapons. Go to the forest of dandakaranya. The river Goutami Ganga flows through that forest. Pray to Shiva there and I am sure that your wishes will be fulfilled.”

Pippalada pleased Shiva through his prayers.

“What boon do you desire?” asked Shiva.

I want the boon that I may be able to destroy the gods," replied Pippalada.

"I have a third eye in the middle of my forehead," said Shiva. "The day you can see my third eye, your wish will be granted."

Try as he might, Pippalada could not see Shiva's third eye. Pippalada therefore performed even more difficult tapasya for even more years. Eventually he managed to see Shiva's third eye. From Shiva's third eye was born a demon that looked like a mare.

"What is your desire?" asked the demon of Pippalada.

"Kill my enemies, the gods," was the reply.

The demon immediately attacked Pippalada.

"What are you doing?" asked Pippalada. "Why are you trying to kill me? I asked you to kill the gods."

"But your body has bee created by the gods," replied the demon. "I will therefore kill you also."

Pippalada ran to Shiva for deliverance. Shiva earmarked a region inside the forest for Pippalada. There the demon was not permitted to enter. Pippalada lived there, protected from the ravages of the demon. Meanwhile, the gods requested Shiva to save them as well. Shiva persuaded Pippalada to control his anger. He convinced Pippalada that nothing was to be gained by killing the gods. That would not bring his parents back.

Pippalada agreed. But he wished to see his parents once. Accordingly, vimana descended from heaven on which Dadhichi and Lopamudra were seated. They blessed Pippalada and asked him to marry and have children.

As for the demon, it became a river and merged with the holy Ganga.

9.28 Nageshvara

There was a city named Pratishthana. A king named Shurasena ruled in that city. Shurasena did not have any sons. After a lot of effort, a son was born to him. But the son happened to be a snake. The king and the queen were mortified at this turn of events. But they brought up their son in great secrecy. Not even the king's ministers and priests knew that the prince was a snake.

When the prince grew slightly, he began to talk like a human, even though he was a snake. King Shurasena arranged for the prince's education. After the snake had become learned in the knowledge of the Vedas, he told his father, "Father, it is time for me to get married. If I do not have a son, I am certain to go to naraka."

King Shurasena was very surprised to hear this. “How is that possible?” he asked. “Which princess will consent to marry a snake?”

“I don’t know,” replied the prince. “But I do know that I have to get married. Other wise, I will commit suicide. There are many forms of marriage that are permissible. Perhaps a princess can be kidnapped and married to me.”

Shurasena called his ministers and told them, “My son Nageshvara has now come of age. He has also been made the heir-apparent to the kingdom. There is no one equal to him in bravery on earth, in heaven or in the underworld. I am getting old. Please arrange for Nageshvara to get married. I shall then relinquish my kingdom and retire to the forest.”

The king did not of course tell his ministers that Nageshvara was a snake.

Shurasena had an aged minister. This minister reported that there was a king named Vijaya who ruled in the eastern part of the country. King Vijaya had eight sons and one daughter. The daughter’s name was Bhogavati and she was very beautiful. She would be the right match for Nageshvara.

The aged minister was sent as a messenger to Vijaya and the king agreed to the match. There was a custom amongst kshatriyas that the bride did not always have to be married to the bridegroom in person. She could also be married to the bridegroom’s sword or some other weapon. The minister explained to King Vijaya that there were some private reasons which made it impossible for Nageshvara to come in person for the marriage. Bhogavati should be married off to Nageshvara’s sword. Vijaya consented to this and the marriage ceremony was performed. The entire retinue then returned to the city of Pratishthana.

But what was to be done now that the marriage was over? Nageshvara’s mother sent a made to Bhogavati. The maid was to tell Bhogavati that her husband was actually a snake and then observe her reaction.

The maid told Bhogavati, “Your husband is a god, but he has the form of a snake.”

“That is my good fortune,” replied Bhoavati. “Normally, women are married to men. I must have performed many good deeds in my earlier life to have been married to a god.”

Bhogavati was then brought to Nageshvara and at the sight of Bhogavati, Nageshvara remembered his earlier life. He used to be a snake (naga) in his earlier life and was a companion of Shiva’s. His wife in the earlier life was Bhogavati.

There had bee an occasion when Shiva had laughed at a joke of parvati's and Nageshvara had also laughed. This had annoyed Shiva and he had cursed Nageshvara that he would be born on earth as the son of a human, but in the form of a snake. When he went and bathed in Goutami Ganga, the period of the curse would be over. When Nageshvara recounted these incidents to Bhogavati, she also remembered her earlier life. The two went and bathed in the scared river and Nageshvara obtained a handsome and divine form. Nageshavara ruled after Shurasena's death. And when Nageshvara and Bhogavati died, they went back to Kailasa to live with Shiva.

On the banks of the Goutami Ganga, Nageshvara and Bhogavati built a temple to Shiva. This is a famous tirtha known as nagatirtha.

9.29Brahma's Head

Years ago, there was a war between the gods and the demons and the gods lost. The gods came to Brahma for advice and Brahma asked them to pray to Shiva.

When Shiva appeared before them, the gods said, "The demons have defeated us. Please kill them and save us."

Shiva went to fight with the demons. He drove the demons off from Mount Sumeru and out of heaven. He pursued them to the ends of the earth. All this exertion made Shiva sweat. And wherever the drops of sweat fell down on the ground, terrible ogresses named matris were created. The matris also started to kill the demons and pursued them down to the underworld.

While the matris were killing the demons in the underworld, Brahma and the other dos waited on the banks of the river Goutami Ganga. This place came to be known as Pratishthana.

When the matris had killed all the demons, they returned to earth and began to live on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. This tirtha has come to be known as matritirtha.

Brahma used to have five heads. The fifth head was in the shape of a donkey's head. When the demons were running away to the underworld, this donkey's head addressed the demons and said, "Why are you running away? Come back and fight with the gods. I shall aid you in your fight."

The gods were alarmed at this paradoxical situation. Brahma was helping them in their flight with the demons and Brahma's fifth head was trying to help the demons. They went to Vishnu and said, "Please cut off Brahma's fifth head. It is causing too much of confusion."

"I can do what you want," replied Vishnu, "but there is a problem. When the cut-off head falls on earth, it will destroy the earth. I think you should pray to Shiva to find a way out."

The gods prayed to Shiva and Shiva agreed to cut off the head. But what was to be done with the severed head? The earth refused to bear it and so did the ocean. Finally it was decided that Shiva himself would bear the head.

The place where Shiva cut off Brahma's fifth head is known as rudratirtha. Ever since that day, Brahma has had four heads and is known as Chaturmukha (chatur connotes four and mukha connotes face). There is a temple to Brahma on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. This is a holy place known as brahmatirtha. A killer of brahmanas is pardoned his sin if he visits this temple.

9.30The Owl and the Dove

A dove used to live on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. The dove's name was Anuhrada and its wife's name was Heti. Anuhrada was Yama's grandson.

Not very far away, there lived an owl named Uluka. The owl's wife was called Uluki. The owls were descended from the god Agni.

The doves and the owls were enemies. They fought amongst themselves continually. The doves had received all sorts of weapons from Yama and the owls had received all sorts of weapons from Agni. These divine weapons threatened to burn up everything. But Yama and Agni intervened. They persuaded the owls and the doves to forget their enmity and live together as friends.

The place where the doves lived came to be known as a tirtha named yamyatirtha. And the place where the owls lived came to be known as agnitirtha.

9.31The Hunter

There was a sage named Veda. He used to pray to Shiva every day. The prayers lasted till the afternoon and after the prayers were over, Veda used to go to the nearby villages to beg alms.

A hunter named Bhilla used to come to the forest every afternoon to hunt. After the hunt was over, he used to come to Shiva's linga (image) and offer to Shiva whatever it was that he had hunted. In the process of doing this, he often moved Veda's offerings out of the way. Strange though it might seem, Shiva was stirred by Bhilla's offerings and eagerly used to wait for it every day.

Bhilla and Veda never met. But Veda noticed that every day his offerings lay scattered and a little bit of meat lay by the side. Since this always happened when Veda had gone out to beg for alms, Veda did not know who was

responsible. But one day, he decided to wait in hiding so as to catch the culprit red-handed.

While Veda waited, Bhilla arrived and offered what he had brought to Shiva. Veda was amazed to discover that Shiva himself appeared before Bhilla and asked, “Why are you late today? I have been waiting for you. Did you get very tired?”

Bhilla went away after making his offerings. But Veda came up to Shiva and said, “What is all this? This is a cruel and evil hunter, and yet, you appear before him. I have been performing tapasya for so many years and you never appear before me. I am disgusted at this partiality. I will break your linga with this stone.”

“Do it if you must,” replied Shiva. “But please wait till tomorrow.”

Next day, when Veda came to present his offerings, he found traces of blood on top of the linga. He carefully washed away the traces of blood and completed his prayers.

After some time, Bhilla also came to present his offerings and discovered traces of blood on top of the linga. He thought that he was in some way responsible for this and blamed himself for some unknown transgression. He picked up a sharp arrow and began to pierce his body repeatedly with this arrow as punishment.

Shiva appeared before both of them and said, “Now you see the difference between Veda and Bhilla. Veda has given me his offerings, but Bhilla has given me his whole soul. That is the difference between ritual and true devotion.”

The place where Bhilla used to pray to Shiva is a famous tirtha known as bhillatirtha.

9.32 Goutama and Manikundala

There was a city named Bhouvana. In that city there lived a brahmana named Goutama. The brahmana had a vaishya friend named Manikundala. (A vaishya belongs to the third of the three classes and his primary duties are trade and agriculture).

Goutama’s mother gave him a lot of ill advice. As a result of this, Goutama told Manikundala, “Let us go to other countries to trade and make profits.”

“But my father has a lot of wealth,” replied Manikundala. “What is the need to obtain more wealth?”

“You don’t have the proper perspective,” said Goutama. “A successful person is one who does not thrive on what is left to him by his father. He makes his own fortune.”

Manikundala was convinced by Gountama's logic. He did not realise that his so-called friend was out to defraud him.

The two friends set out on their journey, Manikundala providing all the capital.

In the course of their travels Goutama remarked, "Have you noticed how those who follow the path of dharma (righteousness) always suffer? They are neither wealthy nor happy. There seems to be no point in being righteous."

"Please don't say that," protested manikundala. "Happiness lies in following the path of dharma. Poverty and misery are inevitable, they are of no account at all."

The two friends argued over this, but could not decide who was right. They resolved to have a bet. They would ask the opinions of others. And whoever lost the bet would surrender all his wealth to the winner. They asked many people for their opinions. Naturally most people said that it was the evil who thrived and prospered. And it was the righteous who suffered. The upshot of this was that Manikundala surrendered all his wealth to Goutama. But Manikundala continued to praise dharma.

"You are an utter ass," said Goutama. "Haven't you lost all your wealth to me? Yet you continue to praise dharma."

"The wealth is of no account at all," replied Manikundala. "Dharma is on my side and your apparent victory is only an illusion. Dharma will triumph in the end."

The two friends decided to have another bet. This time it was agreed that whoever lost the bet would have his two arms chopped off. They again asked several people and most people said that is was adharma (evil) which triumphed. So Manikundala lost his two arms.

"How does it feel now?" asked Goutama.

"The same as ever," replied Manikundala. "What is important is dharma. And dharma is on my side."

Goutama lost his temper at this. He threatened to cut off Manikundala's head if Manikundala persisted in his praise of dharma. But Manikundala was unperturbed. The friends decided to have another bet. This time it was agreed that whoever lost would forfeit his life. Manikundala lost yet again. And Goutama gouged out Manikundala's eyes and left him for dead.

Manikundala lay on the banks of the Goutami Ganga and pondered about the fate that had befallen him. It became night.

There was an image of Vishnu on the banks of the river and the rakshasa Vibhishana used to come there every night to pray to Vishnu. Vibhishana's son discovered Manikundala lying there and found out from him the entire story. He recounted the story to his father.

"Many years ago, I had joined Rama in his fight with Ravana," Vibhishana told his son. "Ragvana's son Meghanada shot a venomous arrow at Rama's brother Lakshmana. Lakshmana fell unconscious. The monkey Hanumana then went to the Himalayas and brought a mountain named Grandhamadana to Lanka. On that mountain there was a wonderful herb named vishalyakarani which cures all illnesses. When Hanumana returned the mountain to the Himalayas, a bit of the vishalyakarani fell down at this spot. Near Vishnu's image. Let us try and find it. We should be able to cure Manikundala."

Father and son hunted for the herb. The vishalyakarani had become a huge tree. They lopped off a branch and placed it on Manikundala's chest. Manikundala immediately regained his eyes and arms. After curing Manikundala, Vibhishana and his retinue returned to Lanka.

Manikundala began to travel. He eventually came to a city named Mahapura where a king named Maharaja ruled. Maharaja had no sons, only a daughter. The daughter was blind. Maharaja had announced that whoever cured his daughter would become his son-in-law and rule after him. Manikundala cured the princess with his knowledge of the vishalyakarani. He then married the princess and became king of Mahapura after Maharaja.

Many years later, Goutama was brought before Manikundala by the soldiers. He had been arrested on the charge of committing a crime. Goutama had lost all his wealth by then and was no more than a beggar. Manikundala pardoned his friend and shared with him whatever he had.

Such are the virtues of following the path of dharma. There are many tirthas along the banks of the Goutami Ganga where these wonderful incidents took place.

9.33 Kandu

There was a sage named Kandu. He had a hermitage on the banks of the Goutami Ganga. The ashrama was a beautiful place and Kandu performed very difficult tapasya there. In the summer Kandu meditated in the hot sun, in the monsoon he meditated on the wet ground, and in the winter he meditated dressed in wet clothing.

Indra got sacred as a result of all this tapasya. He thought that the sage Kandu might want to become Indra the king of the gods. He therefore called an apsara named disturb Kandu's tapasya.

Pramlocha went to the hermitage and began to sing there in a beautiful voice. This disturbed Kandu and he discovered a beautiful woman wandering around in his ashrama.

“Who are you?” Kandu asked the woman.

“I have come here to pluck flowers,” replied Pramlocha. “I am your servant. I will do whatever you wish me to.”

Kandu had fallen in love with Pramlocha and he married her. He forgot all about his tapasya and Indra heaved a sigh of relief. Years passed. Pramlocha wished to return to heaven, but Kandu would not let her.

After years and years had passed, Kandu came out of his hut, looking rather distracted. It was then evening and Kandu was obviously going somewhere.

“Where are you going?” Pramlocha asked.

“What a stupid question!” exclaimed Kandu. “Can’t you see that it is now evening? I have got to go and observe the evening rites. The day has passed.”

“What day?” asked Pramlocha. “Several days have passed and several evenings have come and gone.”

“No, you came here this morning,” said Kandu. “I brought you to my hut and it is now evening, I don’t understand what you are trying to say. Explain yourself.”

“It is true that I came here in the morning,” answered Pramlocha. “But that was a morning which dawned many years ago. Hundreds of years have passed since that day.”

“How many years?” asked Kandu. “When did you come here?”

“Sixteen hundred years, six months and three days ago,” replied Pramlocha.

“Are you sure?” asked Kandu. “It seems like a single day to me.”

“I am sure,” said Pramlocha. “I dare not lie to you.”

“You have dislodged me from my tapasya,” responded Kandu. “But I will not curse you, since you have been my wife. Go back to heaven. I have to atone for my sins.”

The sage Kandu went to Purshottama kshetra and performed penance for his sins. He was blessed by Vishnu.

Kandu and Pramlocha had a daughter named Marisha.

The Brahma Purana also describes several other tirthas. Most of these are on the banks of the river Goutami Ganga. This is now identified as the river Godavari.

After describing these several tirthas, the text describes incidents in Krishna's life. These we will skip, since they are described in much greater detail in the other Puranas.

9.34Varnashrama

There are four varnas (classes). Their names are brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra.

The duties of a brahmana are to donate alms, perform tapasya, worship the gods, perform yajnas and study the Vedas. To earn a living, brahmanas are authorized to teach and act as priests at sacrifices. The duties of kshatriya are to beat arms and protect the earth, donate alms and perform sacrifices. A kshatriya is also permitted to study the shastras. The duties of a vaishya are agriculture, animal husbandry and trade. That apart, vaishyas should donate alms, perform sacrifices and study the shastras. The duties of a shudra are to serve brahmanas. Shudras can also be shopkeepers and artisans.

In times of emergency, a brahmana is allowed to adopt the livelihoods of kshatriyas or vaishyas to earn a living. In similar fashion, a kshatriya is permitted to adopt the livelihoods of vaishyas or shudras and a vaishya is permitted to adopt the livelihoods of shudras.

There are four ashramas (stages of life) as well. The first of these is known as brahmacharya (celibate studenthood). During this period, the individual spends his days with his guru and studies the Vedas well. He has to serve his guru in proper fashion and live on alms. The next ashrama is that of garhasthya (householder stage). The individual now gets married and has children. He serves the gods, the sages, the ancestors and guests. It is householders who provide alms for sages and hermits. That is the reason why the householder stage is so very important. The third ashrama is known as vanaprastha (forest-dwelling stage). The individual now retires to the forest and withdraws his mind from the earthly life. He can leave his wife in the care of his sons or take her with him. He lives on roots, fruits and leaves and makes a bed for himself under the trees. He is not permitted to shave or cut his hair and his clothes have to be made out of bark or skins. The final ashrama is that of sannyasa (hermithood). A hermit gives up all association with the world and lives alone. He grows completely detached. He lives alone. He gets his food through begging. He is not permitted to spend more than one night in a village, or more than five nights at a time in a city.

9.35The Chandala and the Brahma-Rakshasa

A chandala is an outcast. On the outskirts of the city named Avanti lived a chandala. There was a temple of Vishnu in Avanti and the chandala was devoted to Vishnu. He was also a good singer. Ekadashi tithi is the eleventh lunar day. Every month, on ekadashi tithi, the chandala would fast during the day. At night he would go to Vishnu's temple and sing praises of Vishnu. He never failed to observe this ritual.

The river Kshipra (Shipra) flowed by the city of Avanti. On one particular night, on ekadashi tithi, the chandala went to the banks of the river to collect some flowers for worshipping Vishnu. On the banks of the river there was a tree and on that tree there lived a brahmarakshasa (demon). As soon as the demon saw the chandala, it wished to devour him.

"Please not tonight," said the chandala. "I have to worship Vishnu throughout the night. Let me go now."

"Not on you life," replied the demon. "I have not eaten for ten days and I am famished. I can't let you go."

"Please," said the chandala, "let me go. I promise that I will come back once the prayers are over. You will then be free to do with me as you will."

The demon let the chandala go. The chandala went to the temple. He worshipped Vishnu and spent the night in singing Vishnu's praises. Next day, he returned to the demon.

"I am indeed surprised," said the demon. "You are very truthful. You can't be a chandala. You must be a brahmana. Answer my questions. What did you do all night?"

"I stood outside Vishnu's temple and sang his praise," replied the chandala.

"For how long have you been doing this?" asked the demon.

"For twenty years," was the chandala's reply.

"You have acquired a lot of punya (store of merit) through this," said the demon. "Please grant me one night's punya, I am sinner."

"No," replied the chandala. "I will not part with my punya. I have given you my body, eat me if you will. But the punya is mine own."

"Very well then," said the demon. "Give me two hours" worth of punya. I am a sinner."

"I have told you I will not give you any of my punya," replied the chandala. "But what is your sin?"

The brahmarakshasa related his story.

His name was Somasharma and he was the son of Devasharma. Devasharma was a righteous brahmana. But Somasharma fell into evil ways. A brahmana is not authorised to act as a priest in a sacrifice before he has had his sacred-thread ceremony (upanayana). But Somasharma became a priest at a yajna even though his upanayana had not been held. As a result of this sin, when he died, he became a demon. The chandala was stirred to pity at this sad story and parted with some of his punya. The demon was delighted and expressed his gratitude. He went to a tirtha and performed penance. Thus it was that the demon was freed.

What about the chandala? He returned home and then left for a tour of all the sacred places of pilgrimage. At one such tirtha. He remembered the story of his earlier life.

He used to be a hermit well-versed in the Vedas and the shastras. He used to beg alms for a living. Once he had obtained some alms. But some thieves were then in the process of stealing cows, and the hooves of the cows raised a cloud of dust. The dust fell onto the food and the hermit threw away the alms in disgust. Since he had thrown away alms, he was born as a chandala.

After performing penance for this sin, the chandala was pardoned.

10 Agni Purana

This Purana is basically a preaching to the sage Vashishth by Agni. In his turn, Vashishth narrated it to Vyasaji, who related it to Sutji. Ultimately, Sutji narrated Agni Purana to an assembly of the sages in Naimisharanya.

Starting chapters of the Purana describe about various incarnations of Lord, including Rama and Krishna. Other chapters describe about religious rituals especially those related to the worship of Lord Shiva. Many chapters have description about the earth, stars and constellations as well as the duties of the kings.

This Purana consists of 9 chapters:

10.1The Avatars

In the forest that is known as Naimisharanya, Shounaka and the other rishis (sages) were performing a yajna (sacrifice) dedicated to the Lord Vishnu. Suta had also come there, on his way to a pilgrimage.

The sages told Suta, “We have welcomed you. Now describe to us that which makes men all-knowing. Describe to us that which is the most sacred in the whole world”.

Suta replied, “Vishnu is the essence of everything. I went to a hermitage named Vadrika with Shuka, Paila and other sages and met Vyasadeva there. Vyasadeva described to me that which he had learnt from the great sage Vashishtha, Vashishtha having learnt it from the god Agni himself. The Agni Purana is sacred because it tells us about the essence of the brahman (the divine essence). I learnt all this from Vyasadeva and I will now tell you all that I have learnt.”

Avataras (Avatars)

Do you know what an avatara is? An avatara is an incarnation and means that a god adopts a human form to be born on earth. Why do gods do this. The purpose is to destroy evil on earth and establish righteousness. Vishnu is regarded as the preserver of the universe and it is therefore Vishnu’s incarnations that one encounters most often. Vishnu has already had nine such incarnations and the tenth and final incarnation is due in the future. These ten incarnations of Vishnu are as follows.

(1) Matsya avatara or fish incarnation
(2) Kurma avatara or turtle incarnation
(3) Varaha avatara or boar incarnation
(4) Narasimha avatara - an incarnation in the form of a being who was half-man and half-lion.

(5) Vamana avatara or dwarf incarnation
(6) Parashurama
(7) Rama
(8) Krishna
(9) Buddha
(10) Kalki - this is the incarnation that is yet to come.

The Agni Purana now describes these ten incarnations.

This Chapter contains 7 Sections.

10.1.1 Matsya

Agni told Vashishtha the story of the fish incarnation.

Many years ago, the whole world was destroyed. The destruction in fact extended to all the three lokas (Worlds) of bhuloka, bhuvarloka and svarloka. Bhuloka is the earth, svarloka or svarga is heaven and bhuvarloka is a region between the earth and heaven. All there worlds were flooded with water.

Vaivasvata Manu was the son of the sun-god. He had spent ten thousand years in prayers and tapasya (meditation) in the hermitage vadrika. This hermitage was on the banks of the river Kritamala.

Once Manu came to the river to perform his ablutions. He immersed his hands in the water to get some water for his ablutions. When he raised them, he found that there was a small fish swimming in the water in the cup of his hands.

Manu was about to throw the fish back into the water when the fish said, "Don't throw me back. I am scared of alligators and crocodiles and big fishes. Save me."

Manu found an earthen pot in which he could keep the fish. But soon the fish became too big for the pot and Manu had to find a larger vessel in which the fish might be kept. But the fish became too big for this vessel as well and Manu had to transfer the fish to a take. But the fish grew and grew and became too large for the lake. So Manu transferred the fish to the ocean. In the ocean, the fish grew until it became gigantic.

By now, Manu's wonder knew no bounds. He said, "Who are you? You must be the Lord Vishnu, I bow down before you. Tell me, why are you tantalising me in the form of a fish?"

The fish replied, "I have to punish the evil and protect the good. Seven days from now, the ocean will flood the entire world and all beings will be destroyed. But since you have saved me, I will save you. When the world is flooded, a boat will arrive here. Take the saptarshis (seven sages) with that boat. Don't forget to

take the seeds of foodgrains with you. I will arrive and you will then fasten the boat to my horn with a huge snake."

Saying this, the fish disappeared.

Everything happened as the fish had promised it would. The ocean became turbulent and Manu climbed into the boat. He tied the boat to the huge horn that the fish had. He prayed to the fish and the fish related the Matsya Purana to him. Eventually, when the water receded, the boat was anchored to the topmost peak of the Himalayas. And living beings were created once again.

A danava (demon) named Hayagriva had stolen the sacred texts of the Vedas and the knowledge of the brahman. In his form of a fish, Vishnu also killed Hayagriva and recovered the Vedas.

10.1.2 Kurma

Many years ago there was a war between the devas (gods) and the daityas (demons) and the gods lost this war. They prayed to Vishnu to rescue them from the oppression of the demons. Vishnu told Brahma and the other gods that they should have a temporary truce with the demons. The two sides should get together to churn the ocean. Vishnu would ensure that the devas benefited more from this churning of the ocean than the daityas did.

The truce was agreed upon and the two sides got ready to churn the ocean. The mountain Mandara was used as a churning rod and great sake Vasuki as the rope for churning. The devas grasped Vasuki's tail and the daityas grasped Vasuki's head. But as the churning began, the mountain Mandara which had no base, started to get immersed in the ocean. What was to be done? Lord Vishnu came to the rescue. He adopted the form of a turtle and the peak was balanced on the turtle's back.

As the churning continued, terrible poison named kalkuta emerged from the depths of the ocean and was swallowed by Shiva. Shiva's throat became blue from this poison and he is therefore known as Nilakantha, blue of throat. The goddess Varuni, the goddess of wine (sura), came out next. The gods readily accepted her and thus they came to be known as suras. But the demons rejected Varuni and were therefore known as asuras. She was followed by the Parijata tree, a beautiful tree that came to occupy the pride of place in Indra's garden. A jewel named koustubha emerged and was accepted by Vishnu as his adornment. Three wonderful animals came out next - the cow Kapila, the horse Ucchaishrava and the elephant Airavata. They were followed by the apsaras, beautiful women who became the dancers of heaven. They were known as apsaras because they emerged from ap (water). The goddess Lakshmi or Shri came out next and was united with Vishnu.

Finally, Dhanvantari emerged with a pot of amrita (the life - giving drink) in his hands. Dhanvantari was the originator of medicine (ayurveda). The daityas led

by Jambha gave half of the amrita to the devas and departed with the remaining half.

But Vishnu quickly adopted the form of a beautiful woman. So beautiful was the woman that the demons were charmed. "Pretty lady," they said. " take the amrita and serve it to us. Marry us." Vishnu accepted the amrita, but he had no intention of giving it to the demons. He served it to the gods instead. There was only one demon who was somewhat clever. His name was Rahu. He adopted the form of Chandra, the moon-god, and succeeded in drinking some of the amrita. The sun-god and the moon-god noticed what was happening and reported it to Vishnu. Vishnu thereupon cut off Rahu's head with a sword.

But Rahu had drunk the amrita, so he could not die. He prayed to Vishnu and Vishnu granted him a boon. The boon was that occasionally Rahu would be permitted to swallow up the sun and the complained about him. You can see this happening at the time of the solar and the lunar eclipses. People who give alms during such eclipses are blessed.

The gods obtained the amrita and the demons did not. Thus, the gods became more powerful than the demons. They defeated the demons and regained heaven.

10.1.3 Varaha

Vishnu's next incarnation was in the form of a boar.

The sage Kashyapa and his wife Diti had a son named Hiranyaksha. became the king of the asuras. Hiranyaksha's meditation pleased Brahma and Brahma granted him the boon that he would be invincible in battle. Thus armed. Hiranyaksha went out to fight with the devas. He comprehensively defeated the gods and conquered heaven. He also defeated Varuna, the god of the ocean. Thus, Hiranyaksha became the king of the heaven, the earth and the underworld.

But the asura was not particularly fond of the earth. He himself had begun to live in Varuna's palace under the ocean. So he hurled the earth into the depths of the ocean.

The gods went to Vishnu and prayed that something might be done about Hiranyaksha. They wished to be restored to heaven and they wished that the earth might be brought back from the depths of the ocean. In response to these prayers, Vishnu adopted the form of a boar and entered the ocean. Who should he meet there but Hiranyaksha himself?

Hiranyaksha of course did not know that this boar was none other than Vishnu. He thought that it was an ordinary boar and attacked it. The two fought for many years. But finally, Hiranyaksha was gored to death by the boar's tusks. The boar raised the earth up once again with its tusks.

Vishnu thus saved the gods and the principles of righteousness or dharma.

10.1.4 Narasimha

Hiranyaksha had a brother named Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu was furious to learn that his brother had been killed and the resolved to kill Vishnu. But this could not be done unless h e himself became powerful land invincible. Hiranyakashipu, therefore, began to pray to Brahma through difficult meditation. Brahma was pleased at these prayers and offered to grant a boon.

“I want to be invincible,” said Hiranyakashipu. “Please grant me the boon that I may not be killed by night or day; that I may not be killed by man or beast; and that I may not be killed in the sky, the water or the earth.”

Brahma granted the desired boon. And Hiranyakashipu was happy. He thought that he had taken care of all possible eventualities. And since he had become so powerful, he conquered all the three worlds and kicked the gods out to heaven.

Hiranyakashipu had a son named Prahlada. You no doubt remember that Hiranyakashipu had resolved to kill Vishnu. But strangely enough, Prahlada became devoted to Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu tried to persuade his son. That did not work. He tried to kill his son. That too did not work since each time, Vishnu intervened to save Prahlada.

Meanwhile, the gods had been driven off from heaven. They had also been deprived of their shares in yajanas by Hiranyakashipu. These shares now went only to the asura king. In desperation, they went and prayed to Vishnu and Vishnu promised them that he would find a solution.

One day, Hiranyakashipu called Prahlada to him. “How is it that you escaped each time I tried to kill you?”, he asked.

“Because Vishnu saved me,” replied Prahlada. “Vishnu is everywhere.”

“What do you mean everywhere?”, retorted Hiranyakashipu. He pointed to a crystal pillar inside the palace and asked, “Is Vishnu inside this pillar as well?”

“Yes,” replied Prahlada.

“Very well then. I am going to kick the pillar,” said Hiranyakashipu.

When Hiranyakashipu kicked the pillar, it broke into two. And from inside the pillar, Vishnu emerged in his form of half-man and half-lion. He caught hold of Hiranyakashipu and placed the demon across his thighs. And with his claws, he tore apart the demon’s chest and so killed him. Brahma’s boon had been that Hiranyakashipu would not be killed by man or beast. But then narasimha was

neither man nor beast it was half-man and half-beast. The boon had said that the asura would not be killed in the sky, the water or the earth. But Hiranyakashipu was killed on Vishnu's thighs, which were not the sky. The water or the earth. And finally, the noon had promised that Hiranyakashipu would not be killed by night or day. Since the incident took place in the evening, it was not night or day.

After Hiranyakashipu died, the gods were restored to their rightful places. Vishnu's made Prahlada the king of the asuras.

10.1.5 Vamana

Prahlada's grandson was Vali and Vali became very powerful. When he was the king of the asuras, there was a war between the devas and the asuras. The gods were defeated and were driven off from svarga. As always, the gods fled to Vishnu and began to pray to him to save them. Vishnu assured the gods that he would do something about Vali.

Accordingly, Vishnu was born as the son of Aditi and Kashyapa. The son was a dwarf.

King Vali had arranged for a huge sacrifice and had announced that, on the occasion of the sacrifice, he would not refuse anyone a boon. The dwarf arrived at this sacrifice and began to recite the Veda's. Vali was so pleased at this that he offered the dwarf a bon. Vali's guru(teacher) was Shukracharya and Shukracharya thought that there was something fishy about the way the dwarf had arrived. So he tried to restrain Vali.

"No," said Vali. "I have offered a boon and I shall stick to my word." What boon do you desire? I will give whatever you want."

Before a boon was actually granted, a small rite had to be performed with holy water. Shukracharya was still trying to do his best to prevent the boon from being given. So he entered the vessel in which the holy water was kept to seal the mouth of the vessel and prevent the water from being taken out. To get at the holy water, the vessel was pierced with a straw. This straw also pierced one of Shukracharya's eyes. Ever since that day, the preceptor of the demons has been one eyed.

"Give me as much of land as may be covered in three of my steps," said the dwarf. "I need this as dakshina (fee) for my guru."

Vali agreed. But the dwarf adopted a gigantic form. With one step he covered bhuloka. With another step he covered bhuvarloka. And with the last step he covered svarloka. The three worlds were thus lost to Vali and Vishnu returned them to Indra. Vali had no option but to go down to the underworld (patala). But so pleased was Vishnu at Vali's generosity that he granted the asura the boon that he would bear the title of Indra in the future.

10.1.6 Parashurama

The kshatriyas were the second of the four classes. It was their job to wear arms and protect the world. And rule. The brahmanas were the first of the four classes. It was their job to pray, study the sacred texts and perform religious rites. But the kshatriyas became very insolent and began to oppress the world and the brahmanas. Vishnu was then born as the son of the sage Jamadagni and his wife Renuka. Since this was the line of the sage Bhrigu, Parashurama was also called Bhargava. Parashurama's mission was to protect the brahmanas and teach a lesson to the kshatriyas.

There was a king named Kartavirya who had received all sorts of boons from the sage Dattatreya. Thanks to these boons, Kartavirya had a thousand arms and conquered and ruled over the entire world.

One day, Kartavirya went on a hunt to the forest. He was very tired after the hunt and was invited by the sage Jamadagni had a kamadhenu cow. This meant that the cow produced whatever its owner desired. Jamadagni used the kamadhenu to treat Kartavirya and all his soldiers to a sumptuous feast.

Kartavirya was so enamoured of the kamadhenu that he asked the sage to give it to him. But Jamadagni refused. Kartavirya then abducted the cow by force and a war started between Kartavirya and Parashurama. In this war, Parashurama cut off Kartavirya's head with his axe (parashu) and brought the kamadhenu back to the hermitage.

After some time, Parashurama was away when Kartavirya's sons arrived at the ashrama and killed Jamadagni. On the death of his father, Parashurama's anger was aroused. He killed all he kshatriyas in the world twenty-one times. On the plains of Kurukshetra, he built five wells which were filled with the blood of kshatriyas. Eventually, Parashurama handed over the world to Kashyapa and went and lived on Mount Mahendra.

10.1.7 Rama

Brahma came out of Vishnu's navel. Brahma's son was Marichi's son Kashyapa, Kashyapa's son Surya, Surya's son Vaivasvata Manu, Manu's son Ikshvaku, Ikskhvakku's son Kakutstha, Kakutstha's son Raghu, Raghu's son Aja, Aja's son Dasharatha, Dasharatha's sons were Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Since Rama was descended from Kakutstha and Raghu, he was also called Kakutstha and Raghava. Since his father's name was Dasharatha, he was also called Dasharathi. Rama's story belongs to the solar line (surya vansha), since one of his ancestors was Surya.

Vishnu himself wished to destroy Ravana and the other rakshasas (demons). He therefore divided himself into four parts and was born as Rams, Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Rama was Koushalya's son, Bharata Kaikeyi's. Lakshmana and Shartrughna were the sons of Sumitra.

The sage Vishvamitra came to Dasharatha and pleaded for Rama's help in defeating the rakshasas who were disturbing his yajanas. Rama killed these demons and Vishvamitra was so pleased that he taught Rama the use of all divine weapons. Rama broke a bow of Shiv's that had been in the possession of the king of Mithila, Janaka. This was the task that had been appointed for marrying Sita, Janaka's daughter. Rama married Sita, Lakshmana married urmila, Bharata married Mandavi and Shatrughna married Shrutakirti. On the way back to Ayodhya, Rama also beat Parashurama in a duel.

Dasharatha resolved that Rama should be made yuvaraja, that is, the heir apparent to the kingdom.

But Kaikeyi had a servant named Manthara who plotted otherwise. When he was young, Rama had pulled at Manthara's feet and ever since that day, Manthara had not been kindly towards Rama. She reminded Kaikeyi of the two; boons that had been promised to her by King Dasharatha. Years ago, the gods had been fighting with the demon Shambara and had asked Dasharatha for his help. In fighting with Shambara, Dasharatha had been injured. He had been nursed back to health by Kaikeyi. Dasharatha had promised two boons to Kaikeyi as a reward and Manthara's suggestion was that Kaikeyi should now ask for these two boons. By the first boon Rama would be banished to the forest for fourteen years and by the second boon Bharata would become yuvaraja.

Kaikeyi listened to Manthara. At Manthara's instance, she asked for these two boons. Dasharatha was very angry, but Rama insisted that he would indeed go to the forest for fourteen years. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita first went to the banks of the river Tamasa. From there they went to the kingdom of Guha, the king of the hunters (nishadas). They crossed the river Jahnavi and arrived in Prayaga, where the sage Bharadvaja had his hermitage. Their final destination was the mountain range of Chitrakuta, on the banks of the river Mandakini.

Meanwhile, back home in Ayodhaya, King Dasharatha who could not bear to be parted from Rama, died. Bharata and Shatrughna had gone on a visit to their uncle's house and were recalled. But Bharatha refused to be king. He went to the forest to try and persuade Rama to return, but Rama insisted that he would not return before the fourteen years were over. So Bharata brought back Rama's sandals. He placed these sandals on the throne as a token of Rama's kingship. And he began to rule the kingdom in Rama's name from Nandigrama, rather than from Ayodhya.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita then went to the forest that is known as the Dandaka forest, dandakaranya. This forest was on the banks of the river Godavari and there was a beautiful lgrove inside the forest known as Panchavati. They built a hut there and resolved to live there.

There was a rakshasa woman named Shurpanakha. She happened to come to the place where Rama Lakshmana and Sita had built their hut. Shurpanakha liked Rama so much that she wanted to marry Rama and eat up Lakshmana and Sita. But Lakshmana cut off Shurpanakha's nose and ears with his sword.

Shurpanakha fled to brother Khara and demanded revenge. Khara and fourteen thousand other demons (rakshasas) attacked Rama, but they were all killed by Rama. Shurpanakha then went to her other brother Ravana, the king of Lanka.

Ravana asked the rakshasa Maricha to adopt the form of a golden deer and roam around in front of Rama's hut. Sita was so charmed by the deer that she asked Rama to capture it for her. Rama was long in returning and Lakshmana went to look for him. Taking advantage of Rama and Lakshmana's absence, Ravana kidnapped Sita. Jatayu, the king of the birds, did try to stop Ravana, but he met his death at Ravana's hands.

Rama and Lakshmana were greatly distressed to find Sita missing and they looked for her everywhere. Rama made friends with the monkey Sugriva. He killed Sugriva's brother Bali and made Sugriva the king of monkeys. The monkeys were sent off in all the four directions to look for Sita.

The monkeys who had gone towards the south learnt that Sita was in Lanka, across the ocean. One of these monkeys was Hanumana. Hanumana leapt over the ocean and arrived in Lanka. He discovered the lonesome Sita in a grove of ashoka trees, the ashokavana. Hanumana introduced himself and assured Sita that he would soon be back with Rama. Hanumana caused some general havoc in Lanka and was captured by Meghnada or Indrajit, Ravana's son. Ravana ordered that Hanumana's tail should be set on fire. But Hanumana used his burning tail to set fire to all the houses of Lanka. He then returned to Rama with the news that Sita had been found.

Rama, Lakshmana and the army of monkeys arrived at the shores of the ocean. There they built a bridge over the ocean so that they could cross over into Lanka. There was a terrible war in which Rama killed the giant Kumbhakarna, Ravana's brother. Lakshmana killed Indrajit. Rama killed Ravana with a powerful divine weapon, the brahmastra.

The fourteen years were by now over and Rama, Lakshmana and Sita returned to Ayodhya. There Rama was crowned king and he treated his subjects as his own sons. He punished the wicked and followed the path of dharma. During Rama's rule there was no shortage of foodgrains anywhere and the people were righteous. No one died an untimely death.

On Rama's instructions, Shatrughna killed the asura Lavana and built the city of Mathura in the place where Lavana's kingdom had been. Bharata was sent by Rama to kill a wicked gandharva, a singer of heaven named Shailusha, who lived on the banks of the river Indus with his sons. Bharata killed them and built

two cities there, Takshashila and Pushkaravati. In Takshashila Bharata established his son Ataksha as king and in Pushkaravati he made his son pushkara the king. Rama and Sita had two sons named Kusha and Lava. Rama ruled for eleven thousand years before he died.

This is the story of the Ramayana as recounted in the Agni Purana. It was written by the sage Valmiki after he had heard the story from the sage Narada.

Rama was the seventh avatara of Vishnu, Krishna was the eighth.

10.2 Harivamsha and Mahabharat

This Chapter contains 2 Sections.

10.2.1 The Harivamsha

As you have already been told, Brahma emerged from Vishnu's navel. Brahma's son was Atri, Atri's son Soma, Soma's son Pururava, Pururava's son Ayu, Ayu's son Nahusha and Nahushja's son Yayati. Yayati had two wives, Devayani and Sharmishtha. Devayani had two sons, Yadu and Turvusu. And Sharmishtha had three sons, Druhya, Anu and Puru. The descendants of Yadu were known as the Yadavas.

Vasudeva was a Yadava. His wife was Devaki. Vishnu was born as sthe son of Vasudeva and Devaki in order to remove the wicked from the world. The seventh son of Vasudeva and Devaki was Baladeva. And the eight son was Krishna himself. Krishna was born in the month of Bhadra in the thick of the night. Scared that the wicked Kakmsa might kill the newly born child, Vasudeva left him with Yashoda, the wife of Nanda.

Nanda was the king of the cowherds and he brought up Baladeva and Krishna. Kamsa sent a rakshasa woman named Putana to kill Krishna but Krishna killed her instead. In Vrindavana, Krishna subdued the terrible snake known as Kaliya. He killed several other rakshasas named Arishta, Vrishabha, Keshi, Dhenuka and Gardhabha and made the country safe from the attacksof these demons. He also stopped the worship of Indra. This led to a fight between Indra and Krishna, Indra tried to destroy the inhabitants of Gokula by sending down torrents of rain. But Krishna held aloft the mountain Govardhana and saved the inhabitants of Gokula.

Kamsa's capital was in Mathura, Baladeva and Krishna went there. Kamsa let loose a mad elephant named Kuvalayapida on Krishna. But Krishna killed Kuvalayapida. Baladeva and Krishna also killed two strong wrestlers, Chanura and Mushtika, whom Kamsa had instructed to kill Baladeva and Krishna. Finally, Krishna killed Kamsa and made Ugrasena the king.

Kamsa was Jarasandha's son-in-law and Jarasandha became furious when he learnt of Kamsa's death. He attacked the Yadavas and laid siege to the city of Mathura. After a prolonged war, Krishna managed to defeat Jarasandha. Krishna also defeated another evil king named Poundraka. On Krishna's instructions, the Yadavas built the beautiful city of Dvaraka or Dvaravati. The Yadavas began to live in Dvaraka.

There was an asura named Naraka who was killed by Krishna. Naraka had imprisoned sixteen thousand daughters of the devas, gandharvas and yakshas (guards of Heaven's treasury). These women were freed by Krishna and Krishna married all of them. Amongst Krishna's other exploits were defeating the daitya Panchajana, killing Kalayavna, seizing the parijata tree from Indra and bringing back to life the sage Sandipani's dead son.

Krishna had several sons. Shamba was born of Krishna's wife Jambavati and Pradyumna was born of Krishna's wife Rukmini. As soon as Pradyumna was born, he was abducted by the asura Shambara. Shambara threw the baby into the sea, but a fish swallowed the baby. A fisherman caught the fish and brought it to Shambara's house. When the fish's stomach was cut open, the baby came out. There was a woman named Mayavati who lived in Shambara's house and Shambara handed over baby Pradyumna to Mayavati so that he might be brought up well. When he grew up, Pradyumna killed Shambara and married Mayavati. They returned to dvaraka and Krishna was very happy to see his lost son.

Pradyumma and Mayavati had a son named Aniruddha. Aniruddha secretly married Usha, the daughter of King Vana, Vana himself being the son of Vali. Vana's capital was in a city named Shonitapura. Vana had pleased Shiva through hard and difficult tapasya, so that sometimes he was called the son of Shiva. Vana loved to fight and he had wanted a boon from Shiva that he might get the chance to fight with someone who was his equal in battle. A flag with a peacock on it used to fly from the ramparts of Vana's palace. Shiva told him the day this flag fell down. Vana's desire for with an equal would be satisfied.

With the help of a friend of Usha's, Anuruddha and Usha used to meet secretly in Vana's palace. Vana's guards informed him about this and there was a fierce battle between Vana and Aniruddha At the same time, the flag with the peacock on it fell down. Krishna got to know from Narada about the fight between Vana and Aniruddha and he, Baladeva and Pradyumna arrived in Vana's capital. Shiva came to fight on Vana's side, accompanied by Nandi and Skanda or Kartikeya. But after a duel that lasted for a long time, Krishna triumphed over these enemies. Krishna's arrows also cut off the thousand arms that Vana had. But at Shiva's request, Krishna spared Vana's life and gave two arms with which to make do.

All of these stories about Krishna are related in detail in the Harivamsha. The Agni Purana merely gives a brief summary of the Harivamsha. But stories about

Krishna, the eight avatara of Vishnu, also crop up in the Mahabharata. The Agni Purana, therefore, next summarises the Mahabharata.

10.2.2 The Mahabharat

The Pandavas were merely a pretext. Krishna used the Pandavas to rid the world of evil men.

You have already learnt that one of Yayati's sons was Puru. In Puru's line were born Bharata and Kuru. One of Kuru's descendants was the king Shantanu. Shantanu married Ganga and Bhishma was born from this marriage.

But Shantanu also married Satyavati and had two more sons, Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. Bhishma never married. Chitrangada died young. When Vichitravirya grew up, Bhishma defeated the king of Kashi and brought two of the king's daughters, Ambika and Ambalika, as brides for Vichitravirya. Vichitravirya as also quite young when he died of tuberculosis.

Since Vichitravirya had left no children, Vyasadeva was brought to Hastinapura. Vyasadeva and Ambalika had a son named Dhritarashtra and Vyasadeva and Ambalika had a son named Pandu. Dhritarashtra married Gandhari and they had a hundred sons, of whom the most important was Duryodhana. Pandu had two wives, Kunti and Madri. Kunti's sons were Yudhishthira, Bhima and Arjuna and Madri's sons were Nakula and Sahadeva. But Yudhishthira was really the son of the god Dharma and not Pandu's son. Similarly, Bhima was the son of the god Pavana, Arjuna the son of Indra and Nakula and Sahadeva the sons of the two Ashvinis. Earlier, Kunti had a son named Karna from the sun-god.

This was before she had god married to Pandu. Karna became a friend of Duryodhana's. Because of a curse imposed on him by a sage, Pandu died in the forest.

Duryodhana tried his best to kill the Pandavas. He set fire to a house of lac (jatugriha) in which Kunti and the five Pandavas were staying. But the Pandavas were saved and fled to a city named Ekachakra. There they lived, disguised as brahmanas. In Ekachakra, they destroyed a rakshasa named Vaka. They then won the hand of the daughter of the king of Panchala. Her name was Droupadi and all five Pandava brothers married her. When Duryodhana learnt that the Pandavas were alive, he handed over half the kingdom to them.

Meanwhile, the forest Khandava had to be burnt and Krishna and Arjuna did this together. Krishna had befriended Arjuna. When Arjuna successfully defeated the god Agni at the burning of the Khandava forest, Agni gave him several divine weapons. Arjuna had also obtained divine weapons from his guru Dronacharya.

On the Pandava side, Yudhishthira had become king. The Pandavas organised a rajasuya yajna (royal sacrifice) in which they conquered several kingdoms and accumulated lot of wealth. This made Duryodhana envious.

He arranged a game of dice (aksha) between Yudhishthira and Duryodhana's uncle Shakuni. Shakuni did not play fairly and Yudhishthira lost the game. As penalty for the loss, the Pandavas were to spend twelve years in the forest and one additional year without being detected. Droupadi went with them to the forest, as did the Pandava's priest, Dhoumya.

After the twelve years were over, the Pandavas came to the kingdom of King Virata where they proposed to spend the additional year that had to be spent in disguises. Yudhishthira pretended to be a brahmana, Bhima a cook, Arjuna a dancer, Nakula and Sahadeva stable-hands. Droupadi became the queen's maid. The queen's brother Kichaka tried to molest Droupadi, but was killed by Bhima. When the year was over, the Kauravas attacked King Virata to rob him of his cattle. But Arjuna defeated all the Kauravas and saved Virata's cattle After this success, the identity of the Pandavas could no longer be kept a secret. But thankfully, the one year during which identities had to be kept a secret, was over.

King Virata's daughter Uttara was married to Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son. Abhimanyu's mother was Subhadra, whom Arjuna had married. Subhadra also happened to be Krishna's sister.

The Pandavas now demanded their rightful share of the kingdom, but Duryodhana refused. A war was imminent. A huge battalion of soldiers was known as an akshouhini. Duryodhana collected eleven akshouhinis for the war and Yudhishthira collected seven. Krishna was sent as a messenger to Duryodhana to try and preserve the peace. Krishna told Duryodhana that the Pandavas would be satisfied with a mere five villages. Duryodhana refused to give them even this without a fight.

So the armies gathered for a war on the plains of Kurukshetra. Noticing that elders and relatives like Bhishma and Dronacharya were fighting on the side of the Kaurvas, Arjuna was reluctant to fight. But Krishna gave Arjuna lessons which have come down to us as the Gita. He taught there was no reason for sorrow if Bhishma or Dronacharya died, that was only a death of their physical bodies. The true identity of a person was his atman (soul) which never died, but passed from one body to another. True bliss was obtained when the atman united with the brahman (divine essence) or paramatman (supreme soul). This was always the goal of a yogi, that is, a person who sought union with god.

Thus instructed by Krishna, Arjuna started to fight. With the help of Shikhandi, he defeated Bhishma. This happened on the tenth day of the fighting. Bhishma did not however die. He had earlier received the boon that he would only die when he actually wished to do so. For many days, he lay there in the battlefield

on a bed of arrows. After Bhishma's defeat, Dronacharya became the general on the Pandava side. Dronaharya killed Virata, Drupada and several other kings and soldiers on the Pandava side. Dhrishtadyumna also killed many Kaurava soldiers. On the fifteenth day of the fighting, a rumour gained currency that Ashvatthama, Dronacharya's son, had been killed. Dronacharya abandoned his weapons on hearing this bad news and Dhrishtadyumna faced no problems in killing him. Karna now became the Kaurava general and lasted for two and a half days before he was killed by Arjuna. Shalya was the last Kaurava general. He fought for only half a day and was killed by Yudhishthira.

Bhima and Duryodhana fought the last duel of the war with maces. Bhima broke Duryodhana's thighs and killed him. Ashvatthama had been fuming ever since his father Dronacharya had been killed by unfair means. In the dead of the night, he entered the Pandava camp where he killed Dhrishtadyumna and the five sons of Droupadi. Droupadi was disconsolate and demanded revenge. Arjuna and Ashvatthama let loose divine weapons at each other. Since this might destroy the world, they were asked to withdraw these weapons. Arjuna could withdraw his weapon, but Ashvatthama could not. Ashvatthama's weapon killed the baby that was in Uttara's womb, but when the dead baby was born, Krishna brought it back to life. This baby was Parikshita.

Many kings and soldiers died in the course of the Kurukshetra war. The only ones left alive were Kritvarma, Kripacharya and Ashvatthama on the Kaurava side and Pandava side. After the war was over, Bhishma taught Yudhishthira the duties of king. It was only after this that he died.

As a king, Yudhishthira performed many yajnas and gave a lot of to brahmanas. When Yudhishthira learnt that the Yadvas had been destroyed, he no longer wished to rule. He handed over the kingdom to Parikshita and the Pandavas left on a pilgrimage, in the course of which they died.

It was Krishna who had used the Pandavas as a tool to rid the world of evil kings and establish the good ones. Realising that the Yadavas were also evil, Krishna also ensured that the Yadavas would be destroyed. He then gave up his life at the place of pilgrimage that is known as Prabhasa. After Krishna died, the city of Dvarka was swallowed up by the sea.

This was the story of the eighth avatara of Vishnu.

10.3 Buddha/Kalki and Creation

This Chapter contains 2 Sections.

10.3.1 Buddha and Kalki

The ninth avatara of Vishnu was Buddha and the tenth will be Kalki.

Many years ago, there was a war between the devas and the asuras in which the demons managed to defeat the gods. The gods went running to Vishnu for

protection and Vishnu told them that Mayamoha would be born as Buddha, the son of Shuddhodana. Such were the illusions that Buddha created, that the asuras left the path indicated by the Vedas and became Buddhists. These dastardly creatures performed ceremonies that were a sure ticket to naraka. Towards the end of the Kali era, all people will be dastardly. They will oppose the Vedas, become robbers and will be concerned only with wealth. The disbelievers will then become kings and these kings will also be cannibals.

Much later, Kalki will be born on earth as the son of Vishnuyasha. He will take up arms to destroy these disbelievers. Kalki's priest will be the sage Yajnavalkya. The norms of he four classes (varna) and the four stages of life (ashrama) will be established yet again. People will honour the sacred texts and become righteous. It will then be time for the dawn of a new satya yuga, a fresh period of righteousness.

In every cycle (kalpa) and in every era (manvantara) Vishnu is thus born in various forms. It is a sacred duty to listen to the stories of the ten avataras. The listener attains his desires and goes to heaven.

10.3.2 Creation

Agni next told Vashishtha the history of creation.

Vishnu is the Lord of creation, preservation and destruction. Before creation, it was only the brahman that was everywhere. There was no day, night or sky.

First Vishnu created the waters. And in the waters he sowed the seeds of brahmanda. the great egg. From this seed there developed a golden egg which began to float on the waters. From the egg Brahma created himself. Since he created himself (svayam sambhuta), Brahma is also known as Svayambhu. Having created himself, Brahma stayed inside the egg for an entire year. And at the end of the year, he split the egg into two. One part of the egg formed the heaven, the other the earth. And in between the two parts of the egg, Brahma created the sky.

Brahma next established the earth on the waters and made the ten directions. He created time, lightning, thunder, clouds, rain bows, words and anger. To ensure that yajnas could be performed, texts of the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Sama Veda emerged from his body. Holy people use the Vedas to perform Ceremonies meant for the gods.

From the powers of his mind, Brahma created seven sons. Their names were Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha Kratu and Vashishtha.

Prithu is recognised as the first king Prithu was descended from Dhruva. And Prithu's father Vena was also a king. But Vena was an evil king; he was simply not interested in protecting his subjects. The sages therefore killed Vena with a straw and after Vena had died, they began to knead the dead body's right hand

and it was thus that Prithu emerged. He wore armour and carried bow and arrows when he was born. He ruled well, as per the dictates of dharma. He looked upon all his subjects as his own sons. From Prithu the earth came to be known as prithivi.

10.4Temples, Holy Places and Astrology

This Chapter contains 4 Sections.

10.4.1 How to Pray, How to Build Temples and Deities

The Agni purana next has several chapters on how to pray and on how to build temples and idols. The Techniques of praying to Vishnu , Shiva, Surya and the other gods and goddesses are described, including the special mantras (incantations)that must be used so as to please specific gods and there are prescribed forms for such bathing as well.

A Person who builds temples is blessed. Even if one merely thinks of building temples, the sins of a hundred lives are forgiven. A builder of a single temple goes to heaven (svarga). A builder of five to shivaloka, a builder of eight vishnuloka and a builder of sixteen temples is freed from the shackles of being born again and again. What is the point of earning money if one does not build temples? Money is also meant to be donated as alms to brahmanas, but the punya or merit earned from building a temple is greater than the punya earned from donating alms. The merit earned by builder of temples is greatest for a golden temple, lesser for a stone temple, still lesser for a wooden temple and least from earthen Temple.

More punya is acquired from building an idol than from building a temple. Idols of gods and goddesses should always be set up so that they face the city; they should not face away from the city. The easy is for Brahma's. Vishnu idol can be setup anywhere at all.

Different idols of Vishnu must have different forms. Consider, for example, idols or images of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. The matsya (fish) avatara must naturally look like a fish and the kurma (turtle) avatara must look like a turtle. But the varaha (boar) avatara will four arms like a man and will hold a gada (mace), a padma (lotus flower), a shankha (conch shell) and a chakra (bladed discuss) in these four arms. The narasimha avatara should have two arms holding a chakra and a gada and should wear a garland. The vamana (dwarf) avatara should hold an umbrella and a stick in his two hands. Parashurama will have four hands with a bow. arrows, a sword and an axe in these hands. Rama's image can have either two arms or four. If there are four arms, the four hands will hold a bow, arrows, a conch shell and a chakra. Balarama's image may also have either four arms or two. If there are two arms, the four arms the hands will hold a plough, a conch shell, a club and a chakra. Buddha's image should have a calm appearance. It should be seated on a lotus. The ears should be

elongated Kalka's image is that of a brahmana, seated on a horse and holding a bow and arrows, a conch shell, a sword and a chakra.

Krishna's image may be either two-armed or four-armed. Three of the four arms will hold a gada, a chakra and a shankha. The fourth palm will be opened out in the act of granting a boon. On either side of Krishna's image, there will be images of Brahma and Shiva. Brahma has four faces and four arms and the image should have a pronounced rides a swan . On either side of Brahma's image, there will be images of Sarasvati and Savitri.

Vishnu's image has eight arms. Seven of the arms hold a sword, a mace, arrow, a bow, a shield, a chakra and a conch shell. The eighth palm is spread out as if Vishnu is granting a boon. Vishnu should be shown riding on Garuda. Garuda will also have eight arms. To the right of Vishnu's image, there should be images of Lakshmi and Sarasvati, Lakshmi holding a lotus and Sarasvati holding a veena (a musical instrument). There has also got to be and image of Vishnu exhibiting his universal form (vishvarupa). The Vishavrupa image has four heads and twenty arms.

Chandi's image has twenty arms. The ten arms on the right hold a spear, a sword, a shakti (a small spear), a chakra, a pasha (noose), a shield, a drum and any two other weapons. The ten arms on the left hold snakes a rod, an axe, an amkusha (used for driving elephants), a bow, a bell, a flag, a mace a mirror and a cub. In front of Chandi's image there will be the image of a buffalo with its head cut off. The image of an asura will be shown emerging from the body of the buffalo. The demon's hair, eyes and garland will be red in colour. It will be shown to be vomiting blood and it will hold weapons in its hand, The demon's neck will be on the lion and her left leg will be on the demon's back Images of Chandi may sometimes also have ten sixteen or eighteen arms.

Shiva's image (linga) may be made out of earth, wood, iron, jewels, gold, silver, copper, bronze or mercury.

10.4.2 Places of Pilgrimage

A visit to a place of pilgrimage (tirtha) brings the same punya that is obtained from performing a yajna. It is because people had not gone on pilgrimages or donated gold and cows in their earlier lives that they were born poor in their next lives.

The best place of pilgrimage is Pushkara, Brahma, other gods and sages who wish to go to heaven live there. The best time to go to Pushkara is in the month of Kartika. In Pushkara itself there are two other places of pilgrimage known as Jambumarga and Tandulikashrama.

It is difficult to go to Pushkara. But there are several other tirthas as well. One such is Kurukshetra, where Vishnu and the other gods keep on coming. The river

Sarasvati flows near Kurukshetra. If one bathes in the Sarasvati, one attains brahmaloka.

Any region through which the river Ganga flows also becomes a tirtha. Even if one sees the Ganga, the punya of per forming yajnas is attained. A person who bears earth from the bed of the Ganga on his head is freed of all sins.

Prayaga is another famous place of pilgrimage. Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and the other gods, gandharvas, apsaras and the sages are always there in Prayaga. This is because the two holy rivers, Ganga and Yamuna, come together in Prayaga. There are many tirthas inside Prayaga itself. The sages have said that, in the month of Magha, if one bathes for three days in Prayaga, that is better than donating crores and crores of cows. If one donates alms in Prayaga, one goes to svarga and is born as a king in one's next life. If one dies in Prayaga, one goes straight to vishnuloka.

Shiva himself had told Parvati that Varanasi was a very holy tirtha and that Shiva never left the city. Varanasi is so named because it is located at the junction of two rivers, Varana and Asi. Varanasi is also known as Kashi.

The river Narmada is also sacred.

There may be several holy tirthas, but Gaya is the holiest of them all. A demon named Gayasura once started to perform and such were the powers of his tapasya that the gods began to suffer. They went to Vishnu and asked him to save them Vishnu agreed and appeared before Gayasura. "Accept a boon," said Vishnu.

"Grant me the boon that I may become the most sacred of all tirthas," replied the daitya.

The boon was granted and Gayasura disappeared. The gods returned to svarga, but felt that the earth seemed to be deserted now that Gayasura had disappeared. Vishnu then instructed Brahma and the other gods to perform a sacrifice. He also asked them to go to Gayasura and ask for his body so that the sacrifice might be performed on it. Gayasura readily agreed, and as soon as he agreed, his head fell off from the body, Brahma then proceeded to perform the sacrifice on Gayasura's headless body. But as soon as the sacrifice started, the body began to shake. This meant that the sacrifice could not be properly performed and a solution had to be found. The solution was that the gods should all enter a stone which would be placed on Gayasura's body so that the body would not shake. The sacrifice could then be performed. Vishnu himself also entered the stone. It is because the gods and Vishnu are always there in Gaya that Gaya is sacred.

In fact, there is a story behind this stones as well.

The sage Marichi was Brahma's son and had married Dharmavrata. One day, Marichi went to the forest to collect wood and flowers and returned extremely tired. He called Dharmavrata and said, "I am very tired. Today you must wash my feet for me."

Dharmavrata began to wash Marichi's feet when Brahma suddenly arrived. Dharmavrata did not know what to do. Should she finish washing her husband's feet? Or should she first attend to Brahma, since Brahma-was Marichi's father? She decided to attend to Brahma first. At this Marichi became very angry and cursed Dharmavrata that she would turn into a stone. Dharmavrata was greatly distressed at being cursed for what she thought had not been a fault at all. So she performed tapasya for many years. When Vishnu and the other gods were pleased at Dharmavrata's meditation, they appeared and offered to grant her a boon.

Dharmavrata wished that the curse imposed on her by Marichi might be waived. The gods explained that this was impossible, since Marichi was a very powerful sage. What they would however, do was to make Dharmavrata a very holy stone desired even by the gods. The gods promised to be always inside this stone. It was this stone that was placed on Gayasura's body.

Once the sacrifice was over, Gayasura himself desired a boon from the gods and the gods granted him that Gaya would become the most sacred of all tirthas. It was in Gaya that the Pandavas had prayed to Vishnu.

10.4.3 Geography

The world is divided into seven regions (dvipas). Their names are Jambu, Plaksha, Shalmali, Kusha, Krouncha, Shaka, and Pushkara. The seven dvipas are surrounded by seven oceans and the names of these oceans are Lavana, Ikshu, Sura, Sarpih, Dadhi, Dugdha and Jala.

Right in the centre of Jambudvipa is Mount Meru. Mountains named Himavana, Hemakuta and Nishada are to the south of Meru and mountains named Nila, shveta and Shringi are to the north of Meru. Jambudvipa is known by that name as there are a large number of jambu (jamun) trees in this area. On the top Mount Meru is Brahma's famous city.

Under the earth is the underworld. This too, consists of seven regions and their names are Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talatala, Mahatala, Rasatsala and Patala. The daityas and the danavas live in the underworld. Vishnu is also there in the underworld, in his form of the great snake Shesha. The snake Shesha holds up the earth on its hood.

That part of the sky which is lit up by sun-rays is known as Nabha. Above the earth is the sun, above the sun the moon, above the moon the stars, above the stars Mercury, above Mercury Venus, above Venus Jupiter and above Jupiter the

constellation of the Great Bear (saptarshimandala). Beyond this constellation is the world of Dhruva.

10.4.4 Astrology

The Agni Purana next gives a lot of information on astrology. It states when marriages should take place and when they should not. For example, marriages are never to be held in the months of Chaitra and Pousha or under the signs of Libra or Gemini. If one is going on a trip, then Friday is the best day to start on. Medicine should not be taken if one of the nakshatras (stars) Pushya, Hasta, Jyeshtha, Shravana or Ashvini is not in the sky. If one wishes to have a bath after recovering from an illness, then Saturday is the best day for such a bath.

The first time a child's head is shaved should never be on Tuesday or a Saturday. Ears should be pierced on Wednesday or Thursday. New clothes should not first be worn on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. A new house should not be entered into the months of Chaitra, Jyeshtha, Bhadra, Ashvina, Pousha or Magha. It is best to reap grain on a Wednesday.

10.5 Manvataras, Varnashrama and Vratas

This Chapter contains 4 Sections.

10.5.1 Manvataras

Each manvantara (era) is rule over by a Manu.

The first Manu was Svayambhuva. Shatakratu held the title of Indra during this manvantara.

The second Manu was Svarochisha. Vipashchita held the title of Indra during this manvantara.

Third Manu was Uttama and Sushanti was Indra then.

The fourth Manu was tapasa and Shikhi held the title of Indra then.

The fifth Manu was Raivata and Vitatha was Indra then.

The title of Indra was held by Manojava during the sixth manvantara, the Manu being Chakhusha.

Next came Shraddhadeva, the seventh Manu Purandara being the Indra.

The eighth Manu's name is Savarni and the eighth Indra's Vali. The eighth manvantara has not yet come.

The ninth Manu will be Dakshasavarni and the ninth Indra wil be Adbhuta.

During the tenth manvantara, the Manu will be Brahmasavarni and the title of Indra will be held by Shanti.

During the rule of the eleventh Manu Dharmasavarni, the Indra will be Gana.

The twelfth Manu will be Rudrasavarni and the twelfth Indra will be Ritadhama.

Rouchya will be the thirteenth Manu and Divaspati will be the thirteenth Indra.

The fourteenth Manu will be Bhoutya and the title of Indra will then be held by Shuchi.

During each of Brahma's days, there are fourteen such manvantaras. After that comes Brahma's night, when all these living beings are destroyed.

10.5.2 Varnashrama Dharma

All the Manus practised the precepts of dharma (righteousness). This meant non-violence, truthfulness, piety, going on pilgrimages donating alms, serving devas and brahmanas, tolerance of all religions and the following of the sacred texts. It also meant the practice of the system of the four classes (varna) and the four stages in life (ashrama).

The four varnas are brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras. Performing sacrifices, donating alms and studying the Vedas are duties that brahmanas, kshatriyas and vaishyas must perform. In addition, the kshatriyas must protect the good and punish the evil. The vaishyas must take care of trade, agriculture and animal husbandry. The duties of shudras are to serve the brahmanas and artisanship. When brahmanas take up the upavita, the sacred thread that is the mark of the first three classes, it is like a second birth for them. So brahmanas are known as dvijas(born twice).

An anuloma marriage is a marriage where the husband is from a higher class than the wife. The offspring of such a marriage belong to the mothers class. A pratiloma marriage is a marriage where the wife is from a higher class than the husband. Chandalas were born this way from brahmana women, Sutas from kshatriya women, Devalas from vaishya women, Pukkashas from kshatriya women and Magadhas from vaishya women. Chandalas are executioneers, Sutas charioteers, Devalas guards, Pukkashas hunters and Magadhas bards. Chandalas should live outside the villages and should not touch those belonging to any other class.

The best name for a brahmana is that which ends in Sharma. Similarly, the best name for a kshatriya ends in Varma, for a vaishya in Gupta and for a shudra in Dasa. The sacred thread ceremony is to be held at the age of eight years for brahmanas, eleven years for kshatriyas and twelve years for vaishyas. No sacred a thread ceremony should be held beyond sixteen years of age.

The first stage in life is that of brahmacharya (studenthood). A student should never eat honey or meat and should never indulge in singing or dancing. He should completely give up violence and speaking to women. His duties are to discuss the shastras (holy texts) and associate with learned men. Apart from that, he will meditate in solitude on the true nature of the brahman.

The next stage of life is that of garhasthya (household stage). A brahmana may have four wives, a kshatriya three, a vaishya two and a shudra only one. The husband and the wife should be from the same varna. Marriage across varna is to be avoided. A woman can marry again provided that her husband has disappeared, is dead. has become a hermit or is such a sinner that he is expelled from his own varna. If her husband dies, a widow is permitted to marry her late husband's younger brother.

A householder should get up at dawn and pray to the gods. He should always bathe in the morning. He should not talk impolitely. He should not bite his nails. He should not laugh at those who are inferior. And he should never reside in a place where there is no king, no doctor or no river. He must not insult his elders. He should never criticise the Vedas, the shastras, the devas, the sages and the king. And he must never travel without a light at night.

The third ashrama is vanaprastha (forest - dwelling stage). Such a person should always sleep on the ground and wear skins as clothes. He should wear his hair matted and give up the company of other people. He has to serve gods and guests and live on fruit and roots.

In the final stage of life (sannyasa) a person becomes a hermit. In this ashrama, a person attains true knowledge and is completely freed. But he should become a hermit only when he is convinced that he has completely lost all interest in material pursuits. Such a person is not affected by birth or death. He realises that the physical body is transient, that it is of no concern at all. It is the knowledge of the atman (soul) that is the best form of knowledge. When one gains this knowledge, one realises the identification of the atman with the brahman, one understands that the brahman is everywhere.

10.5.3 Sins and their Attonement

If one commits a sin, one has to atone for it. This is known as prayashchitta. If one does not atone for the sins that one has committed, it is the king's duty to punish the sinner.

If one drinks from a well where the dead body of an animal has been floating, one has to fast for three days. The worst possible sins are the killing of brahmana, the drinking of wine and theft. Other sins are criticising the Vedas, the bearing of false witness, killing a friend, killing a cow, forsaking one's parents or sons, the selling of ponds, murder, lying, killing animals and the cutting down of green trees for fodder.

A killer of a brahmana has to build a hut in the forest and live there for twelve years. He has to beg for a living and give up all that he possesses to another brahmana. A killer of cows has to live on just coarse grain for a month. He has to live with cattle and follow them around during the day. All his possessions have to be given up to a brahmana and he has to bathe in cow's urine for two months.

If a brahmana steals gold, he should go and report his crime to the king. The king will then hit him with a club and this will be the brahmana's prayashchitta.

The sin of killing kshatriya is one-fourth the sin of killing a brahmana. If one kills a vaishya, the sin is one-eighth the sin of killing a brahmana. And if one kills a shudra, the sin is one-sixteenth of the sin of killing a brahmana. Killing a cat, a mongoose, a frog, a dog, a lizard or a crow is as sinful as killing a shudra.

10.5.4 Vratas

Depending on the tithi (lunar day), the day of the week, the nakshatras (stars), the month, the season and the position of the sun, certain specific religious rites and ceremonies have to be performed. These are known as vratas.

The first day of the lunar fortnight is known as pratipada. The day of pratipada in the months of Kartika, Ashvina and Chaitra are Brahma's tithis. It is then that the worship of Brahma must be done.

On the second day of the lunar fortnight (dvitiya), one should eat only flowers and pray to the two Ashvinis. this makes the supplicant handsome and lucky. Shuklapaksha is that lunar fortnight in which the moon waxes and Shuklapaksha dvitiya in the month of Kartika is earmarked for the worship of Yama. If one performs this vrata, one does not have to go to naraka (hell). This is also the day for praying to Balarama and Krishna.

It was on the third day of the lunar fortnight (tritiya), in shuklapaksha and in the month of Chaitra, that Shiva married Parvati or Gouri. Rites performed on this day are thus known as gourivrata. Shiva and Parvati have to be given offerings of fruit. The eight names of Parvati have to be recited. These are Lalita, Vijaya, Bhadra Bhavani, Kumuda, Shiva, Vasudevi and Gouri.

Chaturthi vrata is performed on the fourth day of the lunar fortnight, is shuklapaksha and in the month of Magha. This is the day for worshipping the common gods (gana devata). The offerings on this occasion are to be wine and fragrant perfumes.

On the fifth day of the lunar fortnight, one performs panchami vrata. This grants good health and takes care of bad omens. Particularly auspicious for panchami vrata are the shuklapakshas in the months of Shravana, Bhadra, Ashvina and Kartika.

On the sixth day of the lunar fortnight one performs shashthi vrata. One has to live only on fruit and if one performs this vrata, the fruits of any action that one performs live forever. Shashthi vrata should be observed especially in the months of Kartika and Bhadra.

Surya is to be worshipped on the seventh (saptami) day of the lunar fortnight. If saptami vrata is observed in shuklapaksha, all sorrow disappears. Sins are stoned for and all one's desires are attained. Women who have no children can have sons if they observe these rites.

The eight day of the lunar fortnight (ashtami) is very significant. Krishna was born on this tithi in the month of Bhadra when the nakshatra Rohini was in the sky. Ashtami is therefore auspicious in the month of Bhadra. If one fasts on that day and prays to Krishna, the sins of one's earlier seven lives are atoned for. But this vrata is to be observed in krishnapaksha and not in shuklapaksha, since Krishna was born in Krishnapaksha. Together with Krishna, Rohini and the moon, Devaki, Vasudeva, Yashoda, Nanda and Balarama are also to be worshipped on the occasion. Since Krishna took birth (janma) on this ashtami tithi, this particular day is known as janmashtami.

The eighth day of the lunar fortnight can be important even if it is not the month of Bhadra. For example, the eighth day of the lunar fortnight might be a Wednesday (budha vara) in both shuklapaksha and krishnapaksha. Irrespective of the month, such an ashtami is important and is known as budhashtami. On that day one has to live only on molasses and rice and perform the vrata.

There used to be a brahamana named Dhira whose wife was named Rambha. Dhira's son was Koushika, his daughter was Vijaya and Dhira's bull was named Dhanada. Koushika would go with the other cowherds to graze the bull. Once when Koushika was having a bath in the river Bhagirathi and the bull was grazing, some thieves came and stole the bull. Koushika and his sister Vijaya looked everywhere for it, but could not find it. In searching for the bull, they came to a lake where some women were bathing in the course of performing a vrata. Brother and sister were tired and hungry and they craved for some food. The women agreed to give them food, but only after Koushika and Vijaya had also performed the budhashtami vrata. And as soon as Koushika perfomed the ritual, the bull was miraculously returned to him. Such were the powers of the vrata that Koushika could get his sister Vijaya married off to Yama and himself became the king of Ayodhya. After their parents Dhira and Rambha had died, Vijaya discovered that her father and mother were in naraka. When she asked Yama as to how her parents might be delivered from naraka, Yama told her that Koushika and Vijaya should perform budhashtami vrata again. And immediately after they did so, the parents attained svarga.

The ninth day of the lunar fortnight is navami and navami in shuklapaksha, especially in the month of Ashvina, is earmarked for the worship of Gouri. An animal has to be sacrificed and offered to the goddess on this occasion.

The brahmanas become all powerful if they observe dashami vrata on the tenth day of the lunar fortnight and donate ten cows. The eleventh day of the lunar fortnight (ekadashi) is for fasting. It is also the tithi for praying to Vishnu. The observance of ekadashi vrata grants sons and wealth and atones for one's sins.

The twelfth day of the lunar fortnight is dvadashi. Any dvadashi in shuklapaksha is auspicious for worshipping Vishnu. Duadashi in the month of Bhadra is for praying to cows and calves and in the month of Chaitra it is for praying to the god of love (Madana). If one observes dvadashi for an entire year, one never has to go to naraka. An especially good conjunction is dvadashi in shuklapaksha in the month of Bhadra when the nakshatra Shravana is in the sky. if one fasts and observes a vrata then, one earns greater punya than from bathing in the confluence of sacred rivers. If Budha (Mercury) is also in the sky, the punya is multiplied severalfold.

Trayodashi vrata is on the thirteenth day of the lunar fortnight and this ritual was first performed by the god of lover when he wanted to please Shiva. This is the tithi on which Shiva is worshipped. In the month of Ashvina, Indra is also revered on this tithi. And in the month of Chaitra, the god of love is worshipped in shuklapaksha on the same tithi.

The fourteenth day of the lunar fortnight (chaturdashi) is also earmarked for Shiva, particularly in the month of Kartika. One fasts and donates to brahmanas and thereby attains svarga. The chaturdashi in krishnapaksha that comes between the months of Magha and Falguna is known as Shivaratri. Then one has to fast and stay awake the whole night. Earlier, there used to be an evil hunter named Sundarasena. But because he performed a vrata on Shivaratri, all his sins were forgiven.

10.6 Hellish Planets, Charity and Gayatri

This Chapter contains 4 Sections.

10.6.1 Hellish Planets – Narakas (Hells)

If one worships Vishnu with flowers, one never goes to hell.

There are several such hells. Although people do not wish to die, they are bound to die once their predestined time span on earth has been exhausted. One then has to pay for whatever sins one might have committed. The sinners suffer and those who have performed good deeds are naturally rewarded. There are in fact two gates that lead into Yama's abode. The good are brought by yamadutas (Yama's servants) through the western gate and are then taken to svarga. Yama's servants bring the evil to him through the southern gate and Yama then despatches them to the various hells.

If one kills a cow, one has to spend one lakh years in a naraka known as mahavicha. If one kills a brahmana or steals land, there is a burning naraka

named Amakumbha that one goes to. There one suffers till the day when the world is destroyed. A killer of women, children or old men stays in Rourava naraka for the span of fourteen manavantaras. An arsonist is sent to Maharourava and burnt there for an entire kalpa. A thief goes to Tamisra, were he is continuously pierced with spears by Yama's servants for several kalpas. After that, a thief is taken to Mahatamisra to be bitten by snakes and insects.

If you kill you father or mother, you will be sent to the hell Asipatravana. There you will be continuously sliced into pieces with swords. If you burn someone to death, you will go to Karambhavaluka where you will be placed on burning sands.

A person who eats sweets alone goes to Kakola and is fed only worms. A person who does not perform yajnas goes to Kuttala and is fed blood. An oppressor is sent to Tailapaka and is crushed like an oilseed there. A liar is sent to the naraka named Mahapata. There are several other narakas for those who encourage inter-class marriages, those who kill animals, those who cut trees, those who eat too much meat, those who criticise the Vedas, those who bear also witness and those who criticise their teachers.

10.6.2 Giving Charity

Giving alms is extremely important as means for achieving punya. Alms always have to be donated when one goes to visit a temple or a place of pilgrimage. The giver must always face the east and the receiver must always face the north when alms are being given. Such donations have to be made after one has had a bath.

The best objects for donations are gold, horses, oilseeds, snakes, maids, chariots, trees, houses, daughters and cows. If one promises to give something but later goes back on one's promise, one is sure to be destroyed. It should be remembered that the entire object of donation alms is lost if one expects gratitude or friendship in return. It is better to give something to a brother than to a daughter, it is better to give to a father than to a mother.

The entire concept of donation alms is different in the four different eras. In satya yuga, the giver went out in search of recipient to whom he could give something. In treta yuga, the recipient had to come to the giver's house before he would be given anything. In dvapara yuga, the giver never gave anything without being asked for it by the recipient. And in kali yuga, the giver gives only to those who are servile to him.

10.6.3 Gayatri Mantra

Gayatri mantra is a very powerful incantation.

The human body has many veins. Out of these, ten veins are important and their names are Ida, Pingala, Sushumna, Gandhari, Hastijihva, Pritha, Yasha, Alambusha, Huha and Shankhini. These veins bear the breath of life. The breath

of life is called prana vayu. Apart from prana vayu, nine other major breaths course through the human body. Their names are Apana, Samana, Udana, Vyana, Naga, Kurma, Krikara, Devadatta and Dhananjaya.

Gayatri is a goddess worshipped even by Vishnu and Shiva. This goddess is there everywhere, even in every individual's heart in the form of a swan. Gayatri mantra is an incantation to the goddess. If one chants the mantra seven times, one's sins are forgiven. Chanting it then times means that one attains svarga. To attain worlds (lokas) which are even more desirable than svarga, one has to chant gayatri mantra twenty times. If one chants the mantra a hundred and eight times, one does not have to be born again. The severest of sins, like killing cows, brahmanas or parents, are forgiven if one chants the mantra a thousand times. Gayatri mantra has always to be preceded by the chanting of the sacred syllable Om.

10.6.4 The King

The king's duties are many. He has to punish his enemies, ensure the prosperity of his subjects and arrange that his kingdom is ruled well. He has to protect the sages who perform tapasya inside the boundaries of his kingdom.

A king should appoint a wise brahmana as his priest. His ministers should also be wise and his queen should be a woman who follows the path of dharma. When a king dies, time must not be wasted. The priest must immediately find an auspicious occasion so that a new king can be appointed and crowned. A kingdom can never be without a king.

Before the coronation, a prospective king has to purify himself by rubbing his body with mud. Mud from a mountain peak is used for the ears, form a Krishna temple for the face, from an Indra temple for the back, form a palace for the chest, mud raised by an elephant's tusks for the right hand, mud raised by a bull's horns for the left hand, mud from a yajna for the things and from a cowshed for the feet. After the king has thus rubbed himself with different forms of mud and purified himself, he is ready to be anointed. Four types of ministers will appoint him. Brahmana ministers with golden vessels full of clarified butter will stand of the eastern side. Kshatriya ministers with silver vessels full of sweet and thickened milk will stand on the eastern side. Vaishya ministers with copper vessels full of curds will stand on the western side. And shudra ministers with earthen vessels full of water will stand on the northern side. The priests will then use material from all four directions to anoint the king. Water from all the places of pilgrimage will be poured on the king's head and throat. There must be songs and musical instruments must be played.

The king will next pray to Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and the other gods. He will look at a mirror, some clarified butter and the various signs of good omen that have been placed all around. The king will then be crowned and introduced to his ministers, advisers and guards. The priest will be given cows, goats, buffaloes and houses by the king. He will also bow before the brahmanas. After all these

ceremonies have been completed, he truly becomes the king. He circles the fire, touches his guru's feet and with all his soldiers, goes out on a procession through the streets so that his subjects can see him. At that time, the king must be seated either on an elephant or a horse. After the procession is over, the king may return to his palace.

The king has to appoint many officials. The general has got to be a brahmana or a kshatriya. The charioteer must know about horses and elephants, and treasurer must be familiar with different jewels. There has to be a doctor, a keeper of elephants, a keeper of horses, a captain for the palace and another captain for looking after the women of the royal household. Each person must be appointed to the job which suits his expertise and temperament best.

Anyone thus appointed by a king has to stick to certain rules. He must always obey the king's orders and must never do anything that is contrary to the king's commands. In public he must always say pleasant things to the king. If there are any unpleasant utterances to be made, they have to be made in a private audience with the king. Those who serve the king must not be thieves, nor must they ever insult the king. They will not dress like the king, nor will they become too intimate with the king. They must not divulge royal secrets.

For a fort, the king should choose a place that cannot readily be attacked by enemies. The king must ensure that the gods are worshipped, the subjects are protected and the evil are punished. He should never steal form the temples, instead he should build temples and set up idols of the gods there. The brahmanas must also be protected and the king has to make sure that no brahmanas are killed in his kingdom. For a queen, he has to choose a woman who subscribes to these beliefs.

The king will appoint an official to look after every ten villages and another official to look after every hundred villages. Spies must be appointed to find out all that is going no in the kingdom. The king is entitled to one-sixth of all the punya that accrues in his kingdom through his subjects. But he is also credited with one-sixth of all the sins that are committed in his kingdom. The taxes will be levied as per the dictates of the sacred texts. From whatever is received as taxes, half will go into the royal treasury and the remaining half will be distributed amongst the brahmanas. If there is a liar, the king will impose a penalty on him to the extent of one-eighth of the liar's total wealth. If the owner of any property is not known, the king will keep the property is not known, the king will keep the property is safe custody for a period of three years. Once the owner is identified within a period of three years, he can claim the property. But beyond three years, the becomes entitled to the property.

The property rights of any minor orphan are to be protected by the king. If there is a theft in the kingdom, the king must immediately replace what has been stolen with wealth taken from his own royal treasury. If the thief is caught and the stolen goods recovered, they are used to replenish the treasury. One-

twentieth of profits made form trade are to be paid to the king as taxes. One-fifth or one-sixth of foodgrains are to be paid as taxes. One day every month, craftsmen will work free of charge for the king. They will only be gives food from the royal kitchen.

The king has to pay proper attention to the princes. They have to be taught four types of shastras. The first is dharma shastra, which teaches what is right and what is wrong. The second is artha shastra, economics. The third is dhanurveda, the art of fighting. And the last subject that has to be taught to princes is shilpa, arts and crafts. The king has to assign bodyguards to take care of the princes. He must ensure that the princes associate with honourable and learned people and not with undesirable characters. In instances where the princes do not grow up properly despite the king's best efforts, the king is free to keep them imprisoned. But they should be comfortable in the prison and should not be made to suffer there.

The king should give up hunting, drinking and the playing of dice. He must not unnecessarily waste time in travelling around. He must first win over his servants through his behaviour and then do the same for his subjects. It is only after this has been achieved that he attains a position to conquer his enemies through the use of arms. Anyone who brings harm to the kingdom must immediately be killed. If the king delays in doing that which has to be done, the purpose of the action is completely lost. Nor must the king inform others in advance about what is going to be done. No one must get to know about the king's intended actions. Once the actions have been completed, the fruits of the actions performed are information enough for everyone to see. This does not mean that the king will not consult his ministers. Of course he will, that is why they are ministers. Before sleeping or eating, the king must check whether the bed or the food is safe.

There were seven techniques that kings were supposed to use in ruling their kingdoms. These were known as sama, dana, danda, bheda, maya, upeksha and indrajala. Of these, the first four are the most famous. Sama means the art of gentle persuasion. Dana means the usage of donations or money to achieve one's purpose. Danda is punishment. And bheda is the art of aggravating dissension amongst parties opposed to each other. Maya means to use illusions or deceit and upeksha is to deliberately ignore people so as to achieve one's purpose. Indrajala literally means jugglery. In this context, it would mean to perform a balancing act amongst opposing pulls and opposing parties.

What sort of punishment the king should mete out is also laid down. If anyone lies and says that his possessions have been stolen, he is to be fined an amount equal in value to that of the possessions which have supposedly been stolen. A brahmana who bears false witness is to be banished from the kingdom. A person who kills cows, elephants, horses or camels will have a leg or a hand cut off. A thief who steals gold or silver or an abductor of women will be executed. Execution is also prescribed in cases of arson and poisoning. A wife who does

not obey her husband shall be torn to death by dogs. A woman who does not obey her husband or brahmanas may also have her nose, ears or arms chopped off. She will when be set astride a cow and banished from the kingdom.

10.7 Dreams, Omens and Sri Rama

This Chapter contains 4 Sections.

10.7.1 Dreams

Some dreams are bad omens. In fact, they are nightmares. Examples are: dreams about grass or trees growing on one's body, dreams in which the dreamer is shaven-headed or is wearing shabby clothes or dreams in which one is falling form above. It is also bad to dream of marriages, singing, the killing of snakes and the killing of chandalas or animals. If you dream that you are drinking oil or eating bird meat, that is also a bad omen. Other examples are: where the dreamer dreams that he is playing with monkeys or chandalas, when he dreams that devas, brahmanas, the king or the guru is angry or when he dreams that his house had collapsed.

Remedies have to be found if one dreams such evil dreams. Brahmanas have to be worshipped, a yajna has to be performed and the dreamer has to pray to Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma, Ganesha or Surya. Dreams dreamt in the first quarter of one's sleep normally come true over the next one year. Dreams from the second quarter come true over the next six months and dreams from the third quarter over the next three months. Dreams from the last quarter come true over the next fortnight and dreams dreamt right at dawn come true within the next ten days. If one first dreams a good dream and then an evil one, it is the evil dream the will come true. Therefore, if one dreams a good dream, one should not sleep anymore. One should immediately arise.

There are many dreams that are good dreams. For example, dreams that involve mountains, palaces or snakes. Or the dreamer might dream that he is riding on a horse or a bull. It is also good to dream of white flowers in the sky or to see trees in a dream. Especially good dreams are those of the dreamer's possessing many arms or many heads or of grass and bushes sprouting form his navel. What if you dream of wearing white garlands or clothes? That too is good. If you dream of eclipses of the sun, the moon or the stars, by all means rejoice. And if in a dream you see that you have caught hold of the enemy's flag, that surely means that you will triumph over the enemy. And if you actually dream of defeating the enemy, the interpretation is clear enough.

Strangely enough, a dream where the dreamer sees that he is eating rice pudding is a good dream. As is the case with dreams of drinking wine or blood. Or even of eating wet meat. A clear sky in a dream is good. Dreaming of milking a cow or a buffalo with one's own mouth is also good. The dream continues to be a good one if one dreams of milking a lioness or a she-elephant thus. Other dreams which have good interpretations are, for example, dreams of the

dreamer's receiving blessings form devas or brahmanas or of being anointed with water.

The dreamer who dreams of his coronation is blessed. And he is doubly blessed if he dreams that his head has been cut off or that he has died or even that his house has been burnt down. The relatives of such a dreamer increase in number and he also prospers. It is good to dream of musical instruments being played. Or of riding a bull or climbing a tree. Wet clothes, trees laden with fruit and clear blue skies in dreams are especially good.

10.7.2 Omens and Signs

If one is about to go out of the house, one should take care of any bad omens that there might be. Such bad omens are cotton, dried grass, cowdung, coal, molasses, leather, hair, a lunatic, a chandala, a widow, a dead body, ashes, bones and a broken vessel. If one comes across these as one is about to leave, one should not start without pacifying the elements through prayers to Vishnu. The sound of musical instruments is not an auspicious sound at the beginning of a journey. If the means of transport by which one is travelling breaks down, that too, is a bad omen. If weapons break, perhaps you should postpone the journey. The same is the case if an umbrella held over one's head happens to fall. If one hits one's head against the lintel of the door as one is about too cross the threshold, prayers are again indicated. And never call back someone who has just left. That is a bad omen and bodes ill for the success of the journey.

There are good omens for a departure and if one sees these good omens, the journey is bound to be successful. Good omens are white flowers, full vessels, meat, distant noises, an old goat, a cow, a horse, an elephant, fire, gold silver, a sword, an umbrella, fruit, clarified butter, curds, a conch shell, sugarcane, the sound of thunder, lightning and a dead body with no one crying over it.

Omens are important even if one is not going on a journey. A peacock crying on the left means that something is going to be stolen. If a donkey brays with a broken voice, that is good omen and something good will happen. If a boar or a buffalo crosses over from the left to the right, that is a good omen. But if they cross over from the right to the left, that is a bad omen. One's desires will be attained if horses, tigers, lions, cats or donkeys cross over from the right to the left. jackals, moles, lizards, pigs and cuckoos are good omens or the left and monkeys are good omens on the right. If a jackal calls once, twice, thrice or four times, that is a good omen. It is a bad omen if a jackal calls five or six times. It is a very good omen if a jackal calls seven times.

If crows caw on the left of an army, the soldiers will not be able to win. If a crow can be seen near the door a house, this means that there will soon be a guest. A crow looking at the sum with one eye signifies great danger. A crow covered with mud means the attainment of one's desires. A dog barking inside the house leads to the death of the householders. A person whose left limbs are sniffed by a dog, will attain riches. If the right limbs are sniffed, there will be

danger. A dog blocking one's path signifies theft. A dog with a bone or a rope in its mouth means the loss of property. But it is a good omen to see a dog with meat in its mouth.

Cows mooing irregularly mean threats to the master of the house. If this happens at night, there will be a theft or a death in the house. If the cows have horns that are wet or daubed with mud, that is a good sign for the householders. A cow that plays with cranes or doves is bound to die. A cow that licks its feet is also destined to die. If an elephant strikes its right foot with its left, that is a good sign. Prosperity comes if an elephant rubs its right tusk with its foot.

There is great danger if an umbrella falls just as one is about to leave on a trip. Journeys are to be avoided if the stars are not favourable.

10.7.3 Battle

Once a king decides to go out to battle, seven days are needed for preliminaries. On the first day, Vishnu, Shiva and Ganesha have to be worshipped. On the second day the dikpalas (guardians of all the directions) are worshipped, the Rudras on the third day, the planets and the stars on the fourth day and the two Ashvinis and the rivers on the fifth day. On the sixth day, the king has ceremonial bath in honour of the victory that is to come. And on the seventh day, the king leaves to do battle.

Prior to the marching, the army must always assemble to the east of the capital city. The start of the march must be accompanied with the playing of musical instruments. Once the army has begun to march, it must never look back. After having travelled for a couple of miles, it must stop to rest any pray to the gods and the brahmanas.

The king must never directly fight. Because if the king is killed, the battle is lost. The king must be right behind his army, not too far away from it. An elephant will be guarded by four chariots, a chariot by four horses and a horse by four infantrymen. The infantry will also be at the front of army, followed by archers and then by the horses. The chariots and the elephants come last of all. The cowards in the army must not be in the front, they must be at the back. The front is for the brave soldiers. To the extent possible, one should fight with the sun behind one's army.

If a soldier dies in the course of battle, he goes straight to heaven. The blood of brave men wash away all sins. To be struck with a weapon is better than to perform many sacrifices. A person who flees form the field of battle performs a sin that is worse than that of killing a brahmana.

The fight should be between equals. Those who are running away should not be killed. Nor should spectators and those who are unarmed be killed. An enemy captured in battle should not be kept imprisoned. He should be released and treated like a son.

10.7.4 Sri Rama's Teachings

Rama had once taught Lakshmana about the duties of a king. The Agni Purana now relates these precepts of Rama's.

The duties of king are fourfold. Firstly, he has to earn wealth. Secondly, he has to increase it. Thirdly, he has to protect it. And fourthly and finally, he has to donate it. The king must also be polite and politeness comes through the conquering of the senses. The king must be humble. The senses are like mad elephants. If the senses are pampered, like mad elephants, they trample politeness and humility underfoot.

The king must also be non-violent, truthful, clean and forgiving. He should take care to observe all the rituals. He should give food to those who are poor, he should protect those who seek royal protection. He should always use words that are pleasant to hear. The body is here today and gone tomorrow. Stupid is the king who deviates form the path of righteousness to give pleasure to a body that is transient. The curses of unhappy people are enough to bring down a king.

There is only one difference between gods and animals. Gods use pleasant word, while animals use rough words. The king must use pleasant words like a god. And he must use pleasant words not only for those who are his friends or are good, but also for those who are his enemies or are evil. With obeisance the king pleases his guru, with good behaviour the righteous, with duties the gods, with live the servants and with alms those who are inferior.

The kingdom has seven components. These are the king, the ministers, the friends, the treasury, the army, the forts and the state itself. Of these, the most important is the state and it has to be preserved at all costs. The king must be extremely careful in the choice of the ministers and the royal priest. The king must not choose or consult ministers who are stupid.

The king's signs are his golden rod or sceptre and an umbrella that is held over his head. The umbrella should be made of the feathers of swans, peacocks or cranes, but the feathers of different types of birds should not be mixed in the same umbrella. The throne should be made of wood and should be embellished with gold. A bow can be made of iron, horn or wood. The best bow is one that extends over four armlengths. The king can spend upto one year's tax revenue on armaments and flags.

10.8 Dhanurveda, Dynasties and Literature

This Chapter contains 6 Sections.

10.8.1 Dhanurveda

The section on Dhanurveda is on arms and weapons.

There are five types of weapons that are used in war. The first category is that of yantramukta weapons, released from a machine (yantra). This machine may be a launcher or even a bow. The second category is that of panimukta weapons, weapons that are flung by the hand (pani). Examples are spears and stones. The third category is known as muktasandharita. These are weapons that can be flung and also withdrawn. The fourth category consists of weapons like swords that are never released from the hand during battle.

These are known as amukta weapons. And the last category of weapons consists of brute force and strength. This is of use in bouts of wrestling.

The best form of fighting is that with bows and arrows. Next comes fighting with spears, followed by fighting with swords. Wrestling is the worst form of fighting.

Before aiming, the bow (dhanusha) should be held with the arch pointing down towards the earth. The arrow (vana) should be placed against the bow with the head pointing down. The bow should now be raised and the lower end of the bow should be in line with the archer's navel. The quiver should be at the back. Before releasing the arrow, the bow should be held firm with the left hand and the arrow with the fingers of the right hand. The string of the bow should be pulled back such that the tassel of the arrow is between the archer's ear and right eye. The body should not be bent when one is releasing an arrow. Nor should on get excited. The archer has to be still as a pillar. The target has to be in line with the left fist and the archer's posture has to be like that of a triangle. It is best to pull back the string of the bow upto the right ear.

A noose (pasha) is ten arms in length, with both ends of the weapon being circular. The main body of the weapon is made of rope. There are eleven different ways in which a noose may be held. A noose must always be flung with the right hand.

A sword (asi) must hang to the left of the waist. When a sword is to be taken out, the scabbard should be grasped in the left hand and the sword should be taken out with the right hand. There are thirty-two different way in which a sword and a shield may be held.

10.8.2 Property

What happens to a person's debts when he dies? If he does not have any sons, the person who inherits the property also inherits the debts and had to pay them off. If there is a son, the son pays the debts off. But a woman is not to be held responsible for debts contracted by her husband or her son. Nor is a man responsible for debts contracted by his wife or son. Exceptions are instances where a husband and a wife contract a debt jointly.

If there are no witnesses to a contracted debt but the king feels that the debt was indeed contracted, the king must arrange for the debt to be repaid within a period of sixty-four days. In cases of a dispute, the person who brings a false suit

will be punished by the king. And a false witness will be given twice the punishment that is meted out to the one who brings a false suit. A brahmana who bears false witness will be banished from the kingdom. A person who agrees to be a witness, but later withdraws, will be punished eight times as much as the bringer of the false suit. A brahmana who does this will be banished from the kingdom.

It is better that the details of a debt contracted be written down, with the names of the two parties and the witnesses clearly indicated. If the debtor pays in instalments, the details of all such payments must be recorded on the written document. Debts made in the presence of witnesses should also be repaid in the presence of witnesses. If a witness has to take an oath, the oath should be administered after cotton, fire, water or poison has been placed on the head of the witness.

Fire or water can be used to find out if a person is lying or not. If fire is used, seven banyan leaves are placed on the accused's hand. A red hop lump of iron is then placed on the hand and the accused had to go around a fire seven times. If it is found that the hand has not been burnt, the person has been telling the truth. And if the hand has been burnt, he had been lying. Similarly, an accused person can be immersed in the water and if he does not drown, he has been telling the truth. Alternatively, the accused can be made to drink poison. If the poison does him no harm, he is truthful.

If the father makes a will, the property will be divided amongst the sons in accordance with the provisions of the will. But if all the sons get an equal share of the property, the wife should also be given an equal share, otherwise, the father can leave all his property to the eldest son. The sons and the father obtain equal shares to any property or debt that has been left by the grandfather. But the sons are not necessarily entitled to any property that has not been left by the grandfather, but been earned by father. If a son is born after the property has been divided, he too will be entitled to an equal share of any property left by the grandfather. Daughters are not entitled to property. But sons who have go married will use one-fourth of their inherited property to get their sisters married.

10.8.3 Donating the Puranas

The Agni Purana now describes the benefits of giving alms along with the purans. The puranas are to be donated together with cows. And in talking of the mahapuranas, the Agni Purana also mentions most of their length, in terms of the number of shlokas (couplets) that each has. This is worth stating.

The Brahma Purana - twenty-five thousand
The Padma Purana - twelve thousand
The Vishnu Purana - thirteen thousand
The Vayu Purana - fourteen thousand
The Bhagavata Purana - eighteen thousand

The Narada Purana - twenty-five thousand
The Markandeya Purana - nine thousand
The Agni Purana - twelve thousand
The Brahmavaivarta Purana - eighteen thousand
The Linga Purana - eleven thousand
The Varaha Purana - fourteen thousand
The Skanda Purana - eighty-four thousand
The Vamana Purana - ten thousand
The Kurma purana - eight thousand
The Matsya Purana - thirteen thousand
The Garuda Purana - eight thousand
The Brahmanda Purana - twelve thousand

The only mahapurana which is missing from the above list is the Bhavishya Purana. You now have a pretty good idea of how long the Puranas are. The Skaknda Purana is the longest and the Kurma and Garuda Puranas the shortest. But unfortunately, the numbers in the Agni Purana are not terribly accurate. The Padma Purana has fifty-five thousand couplets and not twelve as stated. The Varaha Purana has twenty-four thousands couplets and not fourteen thousand. The Agni Purana itself has slightly over fifteen thousand couplets land not twelve thousand. But at least you have some approximate idea about the lengths of the various Puranas.

The Brahama Purana is to be given in the month of Vaishakha. The Padma Purana is to be donated in the month of Jyaishtha. The Vishnu Purana is to be donated in the month of Ashada and the Vayu Purana in the month of Shravana. The Bhagavata Purana is to be given in the month of Bhadra, the Narada Purana in the month of Ashvina, the Markandeya Purana in the month of Kartika, the Agni Purana in the month of Margashirsha and the Bhavishya Purana in the month of Pousha. The Brahmavaivarta Purana in the month of Pousha. The Brahmavaivarta Purana is for the month of Magha, the Linga Purana for the month of Falguna and the Varaha Purana for the month of Chaitra.

The Skanda Purana is to be given to brahmanas. The Vamana Purana is to be given in the autumn. The Kurma Purana is to be given together with a golden urn. The Matsya Purana is to be donated together with a golden swan. The Brahmanda Purana is to be given to brahmanas.

Great benefits are also to be derived from hearing the Puranas recited. The reciter has to be given alms and the brahmanas must be given cows, rice and land at the time of the recitation. If one arranges for a recitation of the Puranas, one lives long, stays healthy and attains heaven.

10.8.4 Vamsha (Dynasties)

Brahma was born from Vishnu’s navel. Brahma’s son was Marichi, Marichi’s son Kashyapa and Kakshyapa’s son Vivasvana. From this line was descended

Pururava and Pururava's descendants were the kings of the surya (solar) dynasty.

Brahma also had a son named Atri and Atri had a son named Soma. Soma performed a rajasuya yajna (royal sacrifice). Having performed the sacrifice, Soma became the ruler of all the worlds. This made him very arrogant and he abducted the sage Brihaspati's wife Tara. This led to a terrible war between the devas and the asuras. Tara was eventually restored to Brihaspati, but Soma and Tara had a son named Budha. From Budha were descended the kings of the chandra (lunar) dynasty.

There were twelve major wars between the devas and the asuras. The first of these was known as the Narasimha War. This took place when Hiranyakashipu was the king of the asuras. Vishnu adopted the form of Narsismha and killed Hiranyakashipu. He then made Prahlada the king of the demons. The second war was the Vamana war and it took place when Vali was the king of the demons. Vishnu adopted the form of a dwarf (vamana) to subjugate the demons. The third war was the Varaha war and this took place when Hiranyaksha was the king of the demons. Vishnu adopted the form of a wild boar (varaha) and killed Hiranyaksha. The fourth war was the Amritamanthana war and this took place over the manthana (churning) of the ocean for amrita (nectar).

The fifth war between the devas and the asuras took place over the abduction of Tara and this came to be known as the Tarakamaya war. The sixth war was known as the Ajivaka War. The seventh war took place when Tripura led the asuras and this was known as the Tripuraghatana war. It was Shiva who killed the demon Tripura in this war. The eighth war, the Andhaka war, took place when Andhaka led the asuras. It was Vishnu who engineered that Andhaka be killed when Andhaka expressed a desire to abduct Shiva's wife.

The ninth war was known as Vritrasamhara and took place when Vritra led the demons. The tenth war was simply known as Jita. In this war, Vishnu killed Shalva and the other demons, and Parashurama killed the evil kshatriyas. The eleventh war was known as Halahala. An asura named Halahala (poison) had invaded Shiva's body and flooded it with poison. But Vishnu managed to destroy the demon. In the twelfth war, known as Kolahala, Vishnu destroyed an asura named Kolahala (tumult).

10.8.5 Medicine

Dhanvantari was the physician of the gods and he taught Sushruta the art of ayurveda (medicine). The Agni Purana now describes what the sage Ssushruta had learnt, that is, the treatment for various diseases. This does not simply mean the treatment of human illnesses. There is a section known as vriksha ayurveda, which describes what trees are to be planted where. It describes how a garden is to be constructed and maintained.

The chapters on medicine also describe the treatment of elephants, horses and cattle. The mantras (incantations) which are the remedy for snake poison are also related.

10.8.6 Literature and Grammar

Thereafter, the Agni Purana has many chapters on literature and grammar.

It describes the different types of chhanda (metres) that are used in poetry.

Next it discusses the alphabet. There are sixty-four letters (varna) in the alphabet, of which twenty-one are vowels (svara varna). There are three tones (svara) in which the letters of the alphabet may be uttered. Their names are udatta, anudatta and svarita. There are eight places from which the letters may be pronounced. These are the chest, the throat, the head, the back of the tongue, the teeth, the nose, the lips and the palate. Pronunciations should be clear and audible. They should not be nasal and mumbled.

The Agni Purana then discusses the alamkaras (rhetoric) that are used in poetry and plays. Poetry is entirely different from the shastras (sacred texts) and itihasa (history). The sacred texts are full of words and historical texts are full of narrations of incidents that took place. But that does not constitute poetry. Real men are difficult to find on this earth. Amongst these real men, it is difficult to find men who are learned. Amongst the learned men, it is not easy to find some who have a poetic sense. And amongst those who have poetic sense, it is difficult to find a few who can compose poetry. Poetry is impossible without a knowledge of the rules of poetry and even more important, without a sense of feeling.

Sanskrit is the language of the gods. The language of humans is Prakrita. Poetry can be either in Sanskrit or in Prakrita. There are three types of poetry. These are gadya (prose), padya (poetry) or mishra (a mixture of the two). Genuine poetry is, however, only padya

Gadya can be of three types-churnaka, utkalika and vrittagandhi. Churnaka prose is easy on the ears, it has very few compouond words. Utkalika prose is hard on the ears, it is full of compound words. Vrittagandhi prose is some where between churnaka and utkalika.

An epic must always be split up into sections (sarga). It has to be written in Sanskrit, although some mixture of Sanskrit words with Prakrita ones is permissible. The theme of an epic must always be good and historical elements may be introduced if the author so desires.

Literature is useless without the flavour of sentiments (rasa). There are nine sentiments that are used. The first is hasya (humour). The second is karuna rasa (pathos). The third is roudra rasa (that which is wrathful and awe-inspiring). The fourth is vira rasa (heroic themes). The fifth is bhayanaka rasa (horror). The sixth

is bibhatsa rasa (vulgar and obscene themes). The seventh is adbhuta rasa (that which is strange). The eighth is shanta rasa (placidity). And the ninth is shringara rasa (amorous themes).

But the sentiments must be used with feeling. Without feeling, all literature becomes mediocre. Particularly in a play, sentiments can be supplemented with skills (kalal). These skills are normally associated with women and there are sixty-four of them. The more important ones are singing, playing musical instruments, dancing, acting, drawing, making garlands, sewing, hairdressing and using magic.

Grammatical rules of sandhi and samasa (rules for forming compound words) are next described. The difference between the two is that in sandhi, the two words that are being joined retain their original senses in the compound word. The case of samasa is different. Sandhi occurs when two varnas (letters) met. Samasa is a condensation or conversion of two or more words into one. Sandhi does not create any new word. Samasa leads to the formation of a third word which refers to something related to but distinct from either or any of the words combined. Pita (yellow) and ambara (cloth) combined by way of sandhi are pronounced pitambara and mean cloth that is yellow. The same two words combined by way of samasa result in the third word pitambara which means "the one dressed in yellow", that is, Krishna.

There are several possible declensions of words, depending on the vachana and the vibhakti. The vachana refers to the number. Eka-vachana is when there is only one (phalam, a fruit) dvi-vachana when there are two (phale, two fruits) and vahu-vachana when there are more than two (phalani, more than two fruits). There are three genders, pumlinga (masculine), strilinga (feminine) and klivalinga (neuter). Deva, asura, Vishnu are, for example, masculine in gender. Devi, Kalika or maya are feminine. Pushpa (flower) or phala (fruit) are neuter.

There are six karakas (cases) and seven vibhaktis (case-endings). The agent who performs the action indicated by the kriya (verb), is the kartri or doer. To the kartri karaka or Nominative Case, the prathama vibhakti or first case-ending is attached. The object of the action is karma and to the karma karaka or objective Case, the second (dvitiya) case-ending is attached. The means or instruments by which the action is performed takes on the karana karaka or Instrumental Cases and the third (tritiya) case-ending. When a gift is given irrevocably, the recipient takes on the sampradana karaka or Dative Case and the case-ending in question is the fourth (chaturthi). That which is the source of something takes on the apadana karaka or Ablative Case and the fifth (panchami) case-ending. When there is a relation of possessions, the possessor takes on the shashthi vibhakti (sixth case-ending). There is no counterpart of the possessive Case of English grammar because the relation of possession is not directly related to the verb (kriya) and therefore to the doer (karaka). In case of the location in which the action takes place, the karaka is adhikarana (Locative Case) and the case-ending the seventh (saptami).

10.9 Destruction, Pralaya and Yama

This Chapter contains 5 Sections.

10.9.1 Pralaya (Destruction)

Periodically pralayas (destructions) take place. A destruction comes at the end of four thousand yugas on earth. For a hundred years there are no rains and there is widespread drought. Thereafter, Vishnu uses the rays of the sun to drink and dry up all the waters that there are on earth. Seven different suns appear in the sky and they burn up the three worlds of heaven, the earth and the underworld. The earth becomes as flat as the back of a turtle. The breath of the great snake (Shesha) also serves to burn up the three worlds.

After the three worlds have been burnt up, dark clouds full of thunder and lightning appear in the sky. For a hundred years it continue to rain. The rain puts out the fires that have been raging. From Vishnu's breath are created tremendous winds and these drive away the clouds. But there is water everywhere. And Vishnu sleeps on these waters. For an entire kalpa he sleeps. The sages then pray to Vishnu for the three worlds to be created yet again.

10.9.2 Yama and Hell

When human beings die, their physical bodies are given up. But they acquire new bodies that are known as ativahika bodies. In these bodies, they are brought to Yama's abode by Yama's servants. Living beings other than human are not brought to Yama. Yama then decides whether the dead person should go to heaven or to hell. After he has served his time in heaven or in hell, he is born again. Yama further decides what living being the person should be born as, depending on the actions in his past life. And so the cycle of birth death and rebirth goes on and on.

Since he keeps tally of all good deeds and all sins, Yama is also known as the god Dharma. Those who have done good deeds are rewaraded by Yama and those who have committed sins are punished. Chitragupta is Yama's accountant, he keeps the account of all punya and papa.

There are twenty-eight circles of hells with many hells located in each circle. A sinner may have to go to more than one hell depending on the sins that he has committed. Some sinners are boiled in oil, others are pierced with spears and still others are whipped. Some sinners are fed heated iron balls, others are fed blood and rubbish. There are also machines for torturing sinners. Terrible birds eat up some sinners. Other sinners have their heads cut off.

When it is time to be reborn, the killer of a brahamana is born as a deer, dog, pig or camel. A drunkard is born as a donkey. A stealer of gold is born as a worm or an insect. A killer of a brahmana may also suffer from tuberculosis. a drunkard will have teeth like a dog and a stealer of gold will malformed nails. A stealer of food is born dumb. A person who has stolen the property of

brahmanas is born as a rakshasa and lives alone in the forest. A stealer of fragrant scents is born as a mole. One who steals foodgrains is born as a rat. One who steals animals is born as a goat, one who steals milk as cow, one who steals fruit as monkey and one who steals meat as a vulture. A stealer of clothes is born as a crane and a stealer of salt as a cricket.

10.9.3 Yoga

Yoga is the way to circumvent the miseries of life. True knowledge is that which informs one about the true nature of brahman or paramatman. The atman or jivatman is that which characterises an individual. Yoga means union, it is the union of the jivatman with the paramatman. Yoga concentrates one's mind on the paramatman.

The first prerequisites of yoga is non-violence. A non-violent person is always righteous. The second requirement of yoga is truthfulness. The third prerequisite is celibacy. The fourth is controlling one's senses and the last is the worship of god. One who practices yoga should not go around collecting material possessions. A piece of cloth, a covering against the cold, and a pair of sandals are possessions enough for him.

Before meditating on the true nature of the paramatman, one has to seat oneself in a proper asana (posture). The piece of cloth on which one is to sit should be placed in a clean place. One sits on such a seat and tries to purify one's atman by controlling one's mind and senses through yoga. The head and the neck should be held straight up, motionless. The point of vision should be directed towards the tip of one's nose. One should not look in any direction. The arms should lightly rest on the folded thighs and the right hand should be placed, palm upwards, on the left palm. Padmasana (lotus position) is one such recommended posture.

The breath of life (prana vayu) has to be controlled. This process of control is known as pranayama. A finger is placed on the nose when the breath is being exhaled. The entire breath should be exhaled from the body. Since rechana means exhalation, this process of control is known as rechaka. When the breath is inhaled, the inhalation should be such that it fills the entire body. Since puraka literally means 'that which fills', this process of control is known as puraka. When the breath is neither being exhaled nor inhaled, one sits completely still like a kumbha (pot) and this is known as kumbhaka. Pranayama makes one healthy, swift, enthusiastic, strong and collected. Since the senses are controlled, one goes to heaven and avoids going to hell. Material pursuits are like the strong current of a river. The atman drowns in it.

Pranayama alone is not enough. It has to be supplemented with dhyana of japa (meditation and contemplation). One contemplates the true nature of the paramatman. The body is like a chariot. The senses are its horses, the mind is the charioteer and pranayama is the bridle. An individual who dies while performing dhyana is immediately assimilated with Vishnu.

Dhyana involve four different things, all of which must be in complete harmony. The first is the meditator, the second is the act of meditating, the third is the object that one is meditating upon and the fourth is the reason why one is performing the mediation. One does not have to; sit in a rigid posture for dhyana to be possible. It can be done while one is walking, sitting or even sleeping. The important aspect is to establish the object of one's meditation in one's heart.

There are different ways of establishing one's concentration. As an object of meditation, one can meditate on three concentric circles which are black, red and white. In the centre of the circles is a divine lotus. The lotus has eight petals. One thinks that detachment is the stem of the lotus and praying to Vishnu its stamen. Right in the centre of the lotus is a pure spark of fire and that is the paramatman. Alternatively, one can visualise the paramatman in a blaze of light, in the centre of the lotus. Dhyana is far far superior to any yajna that one might perform.

One particular form of deep and intense meditation is known as samadhi. The meditator is then completely still, as calm as the ocean. He loses all track of the outside world. He does not hear, smell, see or touch. His mind has no wishes and feels nothing. He is completely united with god. Such a meditator automatically gets to know all the knowledge that can be gleaned from the Vedas or the shastras. He can obtain all the material possessions that he wants, but he regards them all as no more important than a blade of grass.

Such a meditator attains supreme knowledge. If you look at various pots full of water, you will find that the same sky is reflected in them all. Supreme knowledge tells one that, exactly similarly, it is the same atman that is everywhere. It is the atman which is the same as the paramatman, it is this atman that is in the water, in energy, in water, in the earth and in metals. The atman is everywhere.

10.9.4 The Knowledge of Brahman

Brahma jnana is the knowledge of brahman. This knowledge, which gives the ultimate bliss, is nothing but the sense that the individual atman is identical with the universal brahman or paramtman. The physical body is not the atman. Nor are the senses the atman. The mind or intelligence is not the atman. Life itself is not the atman.

The atman is different from all the objects that have been mentioned above. The atman is in an individual's heart. It sees everything and senses everything, but is different from the physical body. It is this that sages contemplate when they meditate. The sky was created from the brahman, from the sky came wind, from wind fire, from fire water, from water the earth and from the earth the five elements. One has to meditate on the physical body gradually disappearing and merging into the brahman.

The brahman is neither true nor untrue. It has neither form nor is it without form. The brahman has several parts, but at the same time it is an integral whole. The brahman cannot be described. It cannot be achieved through the power of action. The brahman is always pure. It has no ties and it is the true form of happiness. What is required is the sense that it is I, the individual, who am the brahman. I am nothing but the atman and the atman is nothing but the brahman. This sense is true knowledge. The brahman is the Lord who is the origin of everything and the individual is part of the brahman. It is this knowledge that frees one from the ties of the world and this is what brahman jnana is all about.

The brahman is not the earth; it is beyond the earth. The brahman is not the wind, nor is it the sky. The brahman has no beginning; it is independent of all action. The brahman is huge; it is everywhere. The brahman not only has no form, it is beyond all form. The brahman cannot be heard. It cannot be touched. The brahman has neither intelligence nor mind. It has no sense of ego or vanity. It does not have life, birth, old age or death.

The brahman is neither happy nor unhappy. It does not feel hungry or thirsty. It cannot be measured. At the same time, it is both nothing and everything.

Life has five possible ends. By performing yajnas one can attain heaven. By performing tapasya one can become an ascetic. By performing actions one can attain brahmaloka. By detachment from material pursuits (vairagya) one can merge oneself into nature. And by true knowledge the individual gets absorbed into the divine essence. This is known as kaivalya. Detachment means to withdraw oneself from the effects of all actions. And knowledge means the knowledge that the atman is no different from the brahman. This is known as jnana yoga (the yoga of knowledge).

There are few people who attain this knowledge. One of those was Bharata. Bharata had done a lot he became very attached to a deer and when he died, he died thinking of the deer. The result was that in his next life, Bharata was born as a deer. But the deer happened to be a jatismara, that is, it remembered its earlier life. The deer eventually died and Bharata was again born as jatismara human.

The king of Soubira was once travelling on a palanquin and he wanted someone who would bear his palanquin free of charge. The king's servants caught hold of Bharata to bear the palanquin. But Bharata moved slowly and could not keep up with the other bearers. The palanquin did not progress and the king asked Bharata. "Why are you so tired? You have not been bearing my palanquin for long. Can't you some toil? You look fairly strong to me."

Bharata replied, "I am not strong. Nor am I bearing your palanquin. I am not tired. nor am I lazy. I am my atman and feet are and my body is balanced on my

thighs. My shoulders are on my body and your palanquin rests on my shoulders. But I am not my feet, thighs, body or shoulders. I am the atman. The atman is not carrying you. So why do you say that I am beating you?"

Bharata then instructed the king on the mysteries of true knowledge. The atman was pure, ever-lasting, calm, without traits and beyond natural characteristics. Since the atman had no traits and since an individual was the atman and not the body, it was meaningless to say that an individual was strong or weak. The physical body was made of the elements and so was the palanquin. What was the point therefore in saying that the physical body was bearing the palanquin?

Heating these words of wisdom, the king fell at Bharata's feet. "Forgive me," he said, "and let go of the palanquin, Who are you?"

"Who am I?", asked Bharata. "That is not a question that can easily be answered."

The king answered, "I fail to understand. Surely the form in which you are now existing is who you are."

"No," said Bharata. "I am the atman and the atman is the same as the paramatman. The paramatman is everywhere and therefore, the atman is also everywhere. I am everywhere. I am in all physical bodies. It is meaningless to ask who you are and who I am. We are all one and the same. Wood has come from the trees and this palanquin is made of wood. But is the palanquin wood or tree? When you ride on the palanquin, does anyone say that you are riding on a tree? Men, women, cows, horses, elephants, birds and trees, these are all meaningless names. They are all illusions. Everything is one and the same. I am everywhere. If there had been a place or an object where I do not exist, I could have everywhere, I do not know how to answer your question. Tell me king, are you your head or your stomach? Or is all of it, you? But then, what will you call that which is distinct from your physical body? Think about what I have said."

Bharata's words were so profound that the king immediately accepted Bharata as a teacher. And Bharata told the king the story of Ribhu and Nidagha.

The sage Ribhu was Brahma's son. He was also extremely learned. Nidagha was Ribu's disciple. After Ribhu had taught Nidagha what there was to be taught, Nidagha went to the city to see how Nidagha was getting on. Nidagha worshiped his teacher and gave him all sorts of things to eat. After Ribhu had eaten, Nidagha asked him, "Are you satisfied?"

"What do you mean?", asked Ribhu. "The question of satisfaction would have arisen had I been hungry or thirsty. I am my atman and the atman is always satisfied. So what is the brahman that is omnipresent and so are you. You are not distinct from me, we are both part of the same whole. I came to teach you

this knowledge. Now that you have learnt that the brahman is everywhere, let me leave."

After another thousand years had passed, Ribhu came to the city again and discovered that Nidagha no longer lived in the city. He had begun to live on the outskirts of the city.

"Why have you given up living in the city?", Ribhu asked Nidagha.

"Because I do not like to live in the city, where there is a king, " replied Nidagha.

"Who is the king ?". asked Ribhu. "Point him out to me in this procession that is passing. And point out to me the subjects."
Nidagha said, "The king is the one who is as tall as a mountain peak. He is the one who is riding the elephant. The ones who are walking are the subjects."

"What do you mean?", asked Ribhu. "The brahman is in the king and the brahman is in the elephant. How do you distinguish one from the other, how do you say that one is riding the other? Is the king the physical body or the atman and is the elephant the physical body or the atman? Who is riding on whom? I do not understand."

This knowledge, that the atman is the same as the brahman, is known as advaita (unified) brahma-jnana. Ribhu taught this to the king of Soubira. This is the knowledge that all elements are one and the same. It is only those who suffer from illusions who think that different elements and different beings have different identities.

10.9.5 The Gita

Krishna had taught Arjuna the lessons of the Gita on the plains of Kurukshetra. The Agni Purana now relates the essence of the Gita .

If physical body is alive, that is no reason for rejoicing. Just as, if the physical body is dead, that is no reason for mourning. The atman does not die. It does not decay, it cannot be destroyed and it is immortal. The atman does not warrant any tears that might be shed over it. people who are addicted to sensual pleasures cannot realise this. The person who is addicted to the atman alone has no desire for anything else. He had no action to perform. He had neither gains nor losses. The knowledge of this is like a raft that rescues one from the flood of illusions.

11 Bhavishya Purana

Eleventh among the Puranas, contains five parts. The first part contains a description of the genesis, greatness of the dates and worship of Lord Vishnu, Shiva and Surya. Second, third and fourth parts describe about the greatness of Shiva, Vishnu and Surya respectively.

The fifth part contains a description of the heaven. Like other Puranas, Bhavishya Purana also contains a description of the ancient kings and Chandra and Surya dynasties. Interestingly, Bhavishya Purana contains a description of a game that resembles modern chess to a great extent. In all, the subject matter of Bhavishya Purana seems to be an attempt to prove and establish the supremacy of Brahma.

The Bhavishya Purana is an ancient text authored by Sri Vyasa Muni, the compiler of the Vedic texts. It is listed among the eighteen major Puranas. Bhavishya means "future" and Purana means "history", so the text's name would translate literally as "The History of the Future". Though the text was written many thousands of years before the recorded events took place, by the power of his mystic vision, Sri Vyasa was able to accurately predict the happenings of the modern times. One of the text's poetic styles is to present the events as though they have already happened. This is a common practice in Sanskrit poetry, and does not indicate that the book was written in modern times. Modern scholars reject the contents of Bhavishya Purana mostly on the grounds that its information is too accurate. But we should ask ourselves: If there was an empowered saint, who knew past, present and future, and if he chose to write a book named "the History of the Future", shouldn't it contain accurate information about the modern times, as the title suggests? We cannot disqualify it simply because it speaks accurately of the British controlling India, Hitler fighting the world, and Max Mueller misrepresenting the Vedic teachings. "Veda" means knowledge, and the Vedic texts contain knowledge of everything - past, present and future.

This Purana consists of 7 chapters:

11.1Biblical and Modern History

[From the Pratisarga Parva, Chapters Four to Seven.]

Suta Goswami said: Once upon a time in Hastinapura, Pradyota the son of Kshemaka was leading an assembly and meanwhile the great sage Narada arrived there. King Pradyota happily honored him. Having him seated on the seat the sage told king Pradyota, "Your father was killed by the mlecchas, therefore he attained Yamaloka or the hellish planet. If you perform a ‘mleccha-yajna’, then by the effect of this sacrifice your father will attain the heavenly planets."

Hearing this king Pradyota immediately called the best of the learned Brahmanas and started ‘mleccha-yajna’ in Kuruksetra. They built a yajna-kunda which was 16 yojanas in square (128 miles). They meditated on the demigods and offered oblations of mlecchas. There are haras, hunas, barvaras, gurundas, sakas, khasas, yavanas, pallavas, romajas and those who are situated in different dvipas and in kamaru, china and the middle of the ocean; all of them were called with the mantra and burnt to ashes. Then he (the king) gave dakshina (donation) to the brahmanas and performed abhiseka. As a result his father Kshemaka went to the heavenly planets. After that he became famous everywhere as a mleccha-hanta or destroyer of mlecchas. He ruled the earth for ten thousand years and went to heaven. He had a son named Vedavan who ruled for two thousand years.

At that time the Kali purusha prayed to Lord Narayana along with his wife. After sometime the Lord apperared to him and said, "This age will be a good time for you. I will fulfil your desire having various kinds of forms. There is a couple named Adama and his wife Havyavati. They are born from Vishnu-kardama and will increase the generations of mlecchas. Saying this, the Lord disappeared. Having great joy the Kali purusha went to Nilacha

Vyasa said: "Now you hear the future story narrated by Suta Goswami. This is the full story of of Kali-yuga, hearing this you will become satisfied."

In the eastern side of Pradan city where there is a a big God-given forest, which is 16 square yojanas in size. The man named Adama was staying there under a Papa-Vriksha or a sinful tree and was eager to see his wife Havyavati. The Kali purusha quickly came there assuming the form of a serpent. He cheated them and they disobeyed Lord Vishnu. The husband ate the forbidden fruit of the sinful tree. They lived by eating air with the leaves called udumbara. After they had sons and all of them became mlecchas. Adama's duration of life was nine-hundred and thirty years. He offered oblations with fruits and went to heaven with his wife. His son was named Sveta-nama, and he lived nine-hundred and twelve years. Sveta-nama's son was Anuta, who rulled one-hundred years less than his father. His son Kinasa rulled as much as his grandfather. His son Malahalla ruled eight-hundred ninety five years. His son Virada rulled 160 years. His son Hamuka was devoted to Lord Vishnu, and offering oblations of fruits he achieved salvation. He ruled 365 years and went to heaven with the same body being engaged in mleccha-dharma.

having good behavior, wisdom, qualities like a brahmana and worship of God, these things are called mleccha-dharma. The great souls have declared that the dharma of the mleccha is devotion to God, worship of fire, nonviolence, austerity and control of the senses. The son of Hamuka was Matocchila. He ruled for 970 years. His son Lomaka ruled 777 years and went to heaven. His son Nyuha (Noah) ruled for 500 years. He had three sons named Sima, Sama and Bhava. Nyuha was a devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Once the Lord appeared in his dream and said: “My dear Nyuha, please listen, there will be devastation on the seventh day. Therefore, you have to be very quick that you make a big boat and ride in it. O chief of the devotees, you will be celebrated as a great king”.

Then he made a strong boat which was 300 feet long, 50 feet wide and 30 feet high. It was beautiful and all the living entities could take shelter in it. He then himself rode in it, engaged in meditating on Lord Vishnu.

Lord Indra called the devastating cloud named Sambartaka and poured heavy rain continuously for 40 days. The whole earth, Bharat-varsa, had merged in the water and four oceans came up together. Only Visala or Badarikasrama was not submerged. There were 80,000 great transcendentalists in Visala who joined with king Nyuha and his family. All of them were saved and everything else was destroyed.

At that time all the sages praised the eternal energy of Lord Vishnu. Being pleased by the prayers of the sages, the Vishnu-maya reduced the waters of devastation. After one year gradually the earth become visible. Under the hill there is a place named Sisina and the king was situated in that place with his other people. When the water completely dried up, king Nyuha came back to his place.

Suta Goswami continued: The mleccha, king Nyuha became attached to Lord Vishnu and as a result Lord Vishnu increased his generation. Then he created a language fit for the mlecchas, unfavorable to the Vedas. He named it as brahmi-bhasha, or brahmi language, full of bad words, for increasing the degradation of Kali-yuga. The Lord who is Himself the master of intelligence gave this language to Nyuha. Nyuha named his tree sons opposite. They were known as Sima, Hama, Yakuta and also Yakuta, Sapta putra, Jumara and Majuya. The name of their countries were known as Madi, Yunana, Stuvaloma, Tasa and Tirasa.

Hama who was the second son of his father, had four sons know as Kusa, Misra, Kuja and Kanaam. Kusa had six sons - Havila, Sarva, Toragama, Savatika, Nimaruhal and Mahavala. Their sons were known as Kamala, Sinara and Uraka. And their countries names are Akvada, Bavuna and Rasana.

After telling this story Suta Goswami influenced by Yoga-nidra entered mystic slumber. He woke up after two thousand years and thereupon he said: “Now I’m going to say about the generation of Sima. Because he was the first son of his father he became the king. This mleccha king ruled over the country for 500 years. His son Arkansoda ruled for 434 years. His son Sihla ruled for 460 years. His son Iratasya ruled the same length as his father. His son Phataja ruled for 240 years. His son Rau ruled for 237 years. His son Juja ruled the same length as his father. His son Nahura ruled for 160 years, and he destroyed his many inimical kings. His son Tahara ruled the same length as his father. He had three sons: Avirama, Nahura and Harana. Thus I have explained the generation of

mlecchas with the indication of their names only. The mleccha language is considered the lowest language because it bears the curse of goddess Sarasvati. Thus I have summarily narrated the rise of the mlecchas in Kali-yuga.

Sanskrt is the language by which the whole Bharata-Varsa is being praised and glorified. The same language, after going to another country became the mleccha language and mlecchas took advantage of it.

After hearing all this, the sages situated in Badarikashrama, worshipped Lord Nara-Narayana and meditated upon them for 200 years. When they woke up from their meditation, they inquired from their teacher Suta Goswami:

“O disciple of Sri Vyasa, you are so fortunate and greatly intelligent, may you live long. Now please tell us who is the king at the present time?"

Suta Goswami said: “At the present time, the Kali-yuga has already passed its 3000 years. Now the king Sankha is ruling the earth and in the mleccha countries the king named Sakapat is ruling. Please hear about how they came up."

When the Kali-yuga passed 2000 years, the dynasty of mlecchas increased. They created many paths to grow and gradually the whole earth become full of mlecchas. The spiritual master and teacher of the mlecchas was named Musa. He was residing on the bank of the river Sarasvati, and he spread his doctrince throughout the whole world. As soon as Kali-yuga started, the devotion to the Lord and the language of the Vedas were destroyed. There are four kinds of mleccha languages: Vraja-bhasa, Maharastri, Yavani and Garundika. In this way there are four million kinds of other languages.

For example: paniyam (water) is called pani, bubhuksa-hunger is called bhukh. Paniyam-drinking is called papadi and bhojanam-eating si called kakkanam. Isti is called suddharava, istini is called masapavani, ahuti is called aju and dadati is called dadhati. The word pitri is called paitara and bhrata is bather and also pati. This is the yavani lanugage in which the asva is called aspa, Janu is jainu and sapta-sindhu is called sapta-hindu.

Now you hear about Gurundika language. Ravi-vara (the first day of the week) is called sunday, phalguna and chaitra months are called pharvari (February). Sasti is called sixty, these kinds of examples are there.

Crime is becoming prominent in the holy place of Sapta-puri. Gradually the people of Aryavata are becoming theives, hunters, bhillas and fools. The followers of mleccha-dharma in foreign countries are intelligent and having good qualities, whereas the people of Aryavarta are bereft of good qualities. Thus the ruling of mlecchas is also in Bharata (India) and its islands. Knowing all this, O great and intelligent sage, you should just perform the devotional service to Lord Hari.

The great sage Saunaka inquired: “Please tell us, what was the reason that the mlecchas did not arrive in Brahmavarta.

Suta Goswami said: That was by the influence of goddess Sarasvati that they could not enter that place. By the order of the demigods, when the Kali-yuga pursued his 1,000 years, a brahmana named Kasyapa come down to earth from the heavenly planets with his wife Aryavatil. They had ten spotless sons who are known by the names: Upadhayaya, Diksita, Pathaka, Sukla, Misra, Agnihotri, Dvi-vedi, Tri-vedi, Catur-vedi and Pandey. Among them was the learned one full of knowledge. He went to Kashmir and worshipped goddess Sarasvati with red flowers, red akshata (rice), incense, lamps, naivedya (food offerings) and puspanjali (flower offerings). To please her he praised her with some prayers, asking her for better knowledge of Sankrt to put mlecchas into illusion. Being pleased by his prayers she remainded situated in his mind and blessed him with knowledge. Then the sage went to the country known as Misra and put all the mlecchas into illusion by the greace of goddess Sarasvati.

Then he made 10,000 people as dvijas or twice born brahmanas; he made 2,000 people into vaishyas; and the rest of them as shudras. He came back with them and staying in Arya-desha (India) he engaged in the activites of the sages. They were known as Aryans and by the grace of goddess Sarasvati their generation gradually increased upto 4 million, both the men and women with their sons and grandsons. Their king, Kasyapa muni, ruled the earth for 120 years.

There were 8,000 sudras in the county known as Rajputra (Rajput) and their king was Arya-prithu. His son was Magadha. The sage made him a king and left.

Saunaka inquired: "O disciple of Vyasa, O Lomaharsana, please tell us who were the kings to rule the earth in Kali-yuga, after Magadha?"

Suta Goswami said: When king Magadha, the son of Kasyapa was ruling the earth, he remembered his father's administration and he separated the Arya-desha (India) into many states. The state which is on the eastern side of Pancala is known as Magadha, the state of Kalinga is on the east-south side, the state of Avanta is in the south, Amarta-desha is to the south-west, Sindhu-desha is on the western side, Kaikaya is to the north-west, Madra-desha is in the north, and Koninda-desha is to the north-east. These states are named according to his sons' names. After performing a sacrifice he gave the states to his sons. Lord Balabhadra became pleased with his sacrifice, and Sisunaga appeared from the sacrifice as his son. He ruled for 100 years and his son Kakavarma ruled for 90 years. His son Kshemadharma ruled for 80 years and his son ruled for 70 years. His son Vedamisra ruled for 60 years. His son Ajata-nipu ruled for 50 years. His son Darbhaka ruled for 40 years, his son Udayasva ruled for 30 years, his son Nanda-Vardhana ruled for 20 years, his son Nanda-suta, who was born from the womb of a sudri or a low class lady, also ruled for

20 years. His son Pranancala ruled for 10 years. His son Parananda also ruled 10 years. His son Samananda ruled for 20 years. His son Priyananta ruled for 20 years, his son Devananda also ruled for 20 years. his son Yajna-bhanga ruled for 10 years. His son Mauryananda ruled for 10 years. And his son Mahananda fuled for 10 years.

At this time Lord Hari was remembered by Kali. At that time the great and famous Gautama, the son of Kasyapa introduced the Buddhist religion, and attained Lord Hari in Pattana.

Gautama ruled over 10 years. From him Shakya muni was born, who ruled 20 years. His son Shuddhodana ruled 30 years. His son Shakyasimha became the king on Satadri after 2000 years and he ruled for 60 years, by which time all the people were Buddhists. This was the first position of Kali-yuga and the Vedic religion was destroyed.

If Lord Vishnu becomes a king then all the people would follow Him. The activities of the world are carried out by the prowess of Lord Vishnu. He is the master of maya or the illusory energy and whoever takes shelter of that Lord Hari, though he may be a sinful and abominable person, will become liberated.

Buddha-simha was born from Shakyasimha and he ruled for only 30 years. Buddha-simha's son was Chandra-gupta, who married with a daughter of Suluva, the Yavana king of Pausasa. Thus he mixed the Buddhists and yavanas. He ruled for 60 years. From him Vindusara was born and ruled for the same number of years as his father. His son was Ashoka. At this time the best of the brahmanas, Kanyakubja, performed sacrifice on the top of a mountain named Arbuda. By the influence of Vedic mantras, four Kshatriyas appeared form the yajna. Among these four Pramara was samavedi, Chapahani was yajurvedi, Shukla was trivedi and Pariharaka was the Atharvavedi. They were accustomed to ride on elephants. They kept Ashoka under their control and annihilated all the Buddhists. It is said there were 4 million Buddhists and all of them were killed by uncommon weapons. After that Pramara became king in Avanta and he constructed a large city called Ambavati for his happiness. It was as big as 4 yojanas or about 32 miles.

Then Suta Goswami said: "My dear brahmanas I'm being influenced by yoga-nidra, therefore, please go to your respective ashramas and meditate on Lord Vishnu."

After the completion of 2,000 years, Suta Goswami said: When the kali-yuga had passed his 3,710 years, at that time the king was Pramara who rulled 6 years, from him Mahamada was born. He ruled 3 years and his son Devapi did the same. His son Devaduta also did the same. From him Gandharva-sena was born, who went to the forest after ruling for over 50 years and having given his kingdom to his son Shankha. Shankha ruled for over 30 years. Lord Indra sent a heavenly girl to Gandharva-sena named Viramati. A jewel like son was born

form her womb. At the time of his birth, there were flowers raining from the sky, many auspicious instruments were played and the wind was blowing pleasingly. The name of the baby was Siva-drishti, who later left for the jungle with his disciples. After 20 years he became perfect in Karma-yoga. When kali-yuga copmleted 3,000 years, the terrible symptoms of kali had appeared. That baby took birth in the secret place of Kailasa, by the benediction of Lord Shiva, to destroy the shakas and to increase the Arya-dharma or the Vedic reigion. His father Gandharva-sena named his son as Vikramaditya and become happy. This child was very intelligent and very pleasing to his parents. When he was 5 years old, he left for the forest to perform austerities and he continued it upto 12 years. After 12 years he went to the holy city named Ambavati with all the opulence and accepted the transcendental throne sent by Lord Shiva. For his security goddess Parvati created a Vetala (a king of ghosts) and sent it to king Vikramaditya's palace. Once the powerful king went to the temple of Lord Shiva named as Mahakaleshvara, who is the chief of the devas, and who has a bow named Pinaka. There he worshipped Lord Shiva. In that place he built a religious council hall with the pillars made of various metals and decorated with many kinds of jewels and covered with so many plants and creepers and flowers. In that hall he kept a celestial throne. He invited the foremost brahmanas who are well-versed in Vedic knowledge, worshipped them with proper hospitality and heard many religious histories from them. After that one demigod named Vitala come there having a form of a brahmana. Glorifying and blessing the king, he sat down on the seat and said: O master of this earthly planet, king Vikramaditya, if you are very eager to hear them I will describe the stories and histories to you.

Thus ends the seventh chapter of the Pratisarga Parva of the Bhavishya Purana.

11.2 The Prediction of Islam

[From the third part of the Pratisarga Parva.]

Shri Suta Gosvami said: In the dynasty of king Shalivahana, there were ten kings who went to the heavenly planets after ruling for over 500 years. Then gradually the morality declined on the earth. At that time Bhojaraja was the tenth of the kings on the earth. When he saw that the moral law of conduct was declining he went to conquer all the directions of his country with ten-thousand soldiers commanded by Kalidasa. He crossed the river Sindhu and conquered over the gandharas, mlecchas, shakas, kasmiris, naravas and sathas. He punished them and collected a large ammount of wealth. Then the king went along with Mahamada (Mohammad), the preceptor of mleccha-dharma, and his followers to the great god, Lord Shiva, situated in the desert. He bathed Lord Shiva with Ganges water and worshipped him in his mind with pancagavya (milk, ghee, yoghurt, cow dung, and cow urine) and sandalwood paste, etc. After he offered some prayers and pleased him.

Suta Goswami said: After hearing the king's prayers, Lord Shiva said: O king Bhojaraja, you should go to the place called Mahakakshvara, that land is called

Vahika and now is being contaminated by the mlecchas. In that terrible country there no longer exists dharma. There was a mystic demon named Tripura, whom I have already burnt to ashes, he has come again by the order of Bali. He has no origin but he achieved a benediction from me. His name is Mahaoda and his deeds are like that of a ghost. Therefore, O king, you should not go to this land of the evil ghost. By my mercy your intelligence will be purified. Hearing this the king came back to his country and Mahamada came with them to the bank of the river Sindhu. He was expert in expanding illusion, so he said to the king very pleasingly: O great king, your god has become my servant. Just see, as he eats my remnants, so I will show you. The king became surprised when he saw this just before them. Then in anger Kalidasa rebuked Mahamada, "O rascal, you have created an illusion to bewilder the king, I will kill you, you are the lowest..."

[...]

That city is known as their site of pilgrimage, a place which was Madina or free from intoxication. Having a form of a ghost (Bhuta), the expert illusionist Mahamada appeared at night in front of king Bhojaraja and said: O king, your religion is of course known as the best religion among all. Still I am going to establish a terrible and demoniac religion by the order of the Lord. The symptoms of my followers will be that they first of all will cut their genitals, have no shikha, but having beard, be wicked, make noise loudly and eat everything. They should eat animals without performing any rituals. This is my opinion. They will perform purificatory act with the musala or a pestle as you purify your things with kusha. Therefore, they will be known as musalman, the corrupters of religion. Thus the demoniac religion will be founded by me. After having heard all this the king came back to his palace and that ghost went back to his place.

The intelligent king, Bhojaraj established the language of Sanskrit in three varnas - the brahmanas, kshatriyas and vaisyas - and for the shudras he established prakrita-bhasha, the ordinary language spoken by common men. After ruling his kingdom for 50 years, he went to the heavenly planet. The moral laws established by him were honored even by the demigods. The arya-varta, the pious land is situated between Vindhyacala and Himacala or the mountains known as Vindhya and Himalaya. The Aryans reside there, but varna-sankaras reside on the lower part of Vindhya. The musalman people were kept on the other side of the river Sindhu.

On the island of Barbara, Tusha and many others also the followers of Isamsiha were also situated as they were managed by a king or demigods.

11.3 The Prediction of Buddhism

[From the 29th chapter of the Pratisarga Parva.]

Long ago in the country known as Citrartha, the inhabitants of the heavenly planets used to come to play during the time of autumn. One day a heavenly

apsara know as Manjughosha came to that place where the sage Shuka was residing. Seeing this beautiful boy, she tried to attract him while singing and dancing, being overwhelmed by lusty desires. She praised him with a beautiful prayer holding her hands and bowing down. Somehow, she pleased the muni. Then the glorious Shuka, hearing this auspicious prayer asked her to request a benediction. Manjughosha humbly said: "O lord, you are the protector of those who came to your shelter, therefore I'm at your shelter, please become my husband". The sage accepted her and after some time they produced a son named 'Muni' who performed austerity very strictly upto 12 years. He married the daughter of Svarnadeva, the god of gold. They gave birth to a daughter named Kinnari. She was very young and beautiful. She performed austerity to please Lord Shiva, and as a benediction lord Shiva intrusted her to a sober sage Makaranda.

Then her father, Muni, asked lord Shiva to bless her, so that they will successfully make progress in this world.

Lord Shiva said: Upto 30 years you will enjoy your country in the middle of the earth, then it will be destroyed. After hearing this Muni went to his place with Makaranda and resided there. As soon as the 29th year started the battle took place among those kings who took birth as the incarnations of the associates of Krishna. Bauddha, the lord of nyuhas (the lessened people) attacked the beautiful city of Netrapala, thinking that this city is wonderfully decorated with various kinds of jewels. The powerful king Bauddha-simha who had seven-million soldiers, fought with those kings who had only three million soldiers. The fight went on terribly between the armies for seven days and nights. The great powerful kings, who killed all the inimical armies protected by Baudha-simha, were Yoga-simha, Bhoga-simha and Vijaya.

After that more Buddhists came from the countries known as Shyama and Japaka, and all of them were magicians. Again they had a large battle which lasted for one month. Then Netrasimha arrived with seven million soldiers protected by eight generals, for the destruction of the Buddhists. Being afraid, all the Buddhists left India completely and went to China to continue the war from there. The opposite army also continued following them. When they arrived on the bank of the Huha river, it was the month of Magh, the second half part of the month of January, the fight took place again. There were one million soldiers each from the countries of Syama and Japaka, and ten million soldiers from China assembled for a fight. On the other side, Krishnamsa, Deva, Netrapala, Mandalika, Dhanyapada, Lallasimha, Talana and Jana nayaka were the generals, each of them having one million soldiers. There was a terrible battle between the Buddhists and the Aryans. In that war seven million Buddhists, and two million Aryans were killed. Being afraid the Buddhists ran away from the battle and went to their home to produce a wooden army with the help of a machinery arrangement. They made ten-thousand elephants (made out of wood) along with warriors, one million horses, one thousand buffaloes, one thousand hogs, one thousand tigers, one thousand swans, and

seven thousand camels. All these creatures had wooden warriors on their back. Thus with the wooden army which was 125,000 in number, they killed two million soldiers protected by Krishnamsas. Seeing this wonder Jayanta, the expert fighter shot fire arrows toward the wooden armies, so that they were immediately destroyed, being burnt to ashes. Only three million kshatriyas (warriors) were left, and they glorified the proficient warrior Jayanta again and again. Then the Buddhists from China, made a twenty thousand strong iron horse calvary and sent them to fight. The powerful warrior Yogasimha, riding on an elephant held the bow and arrows in his hands and shot to the neck of the iron warriors. Being afflicted by the arrows of Yogasimha five thousand soldiers were killed. Seeing this, Bauddhasimha made an iron tiger and sent it to Yogasimha. By the attack of that iron tiger the brave Yogasimha was finally killed, and then Bhogasimha riding on a horse, went to fight with the tiger. He killed the tiger by throwing a missile, and roared loudly. Then a lion was sent to him by Bauddhasimha and thus he (Bhogasimha) was killed by a lion. When the son of Swarna-vati (Jayanta) saw that his maternal uncles were already dead, he rode on a powerful horse and went to Bauddhasimha. He took illusory arrows and put the opposite army into delusion along with Bauddhasimha. He captured ten-thousand kings including Bauddhasimha, and returned to Krishnamsas having destroyed the mechanical armies.

Then all of them happily went to the city and forcibly “looted” the wealth from the palace, which was very opulent, and came back the fort of the king. Jayanta came and released Bauddhasimha. After being released he offered his daughter Padmaja to Jayanta and also offered 100,000,000 golden coins for the pleasure of his in law. After that all the Buddhists made their vows there itself saying “We will never go to Arya-desa to invade the country.” Then they offered their homage and left. They went to Netrapala with their three million remaining soldiers.

11.4The Prediction of India’s Kings

[From the 31st chapter of the Pratisarga Parva.]

Suta Goswami said: The great powerful king of Madrakesa worshipped the mendicants of the heavenly planets (the Asvini kumaras) for five years and after having received a benediction from them he produced ten sons and one beautiful young daughter named Kantinati. King Madraka invited Maharaj Suryavarna (the present king of Hastinapura), and gave his daughter to him with proper conduct.

Having accepted the new wife, Suryavarna quickly returned to his home with his army. There was a mystic demon named Karbura, the son of Bigbhisana, when he saw Kantimati the daughter of king Madrakesa, he came there and kidnapped her in their presence and went to a mountain called Sahyadri. Seeing this incident Mahiraja became very upset and lamented again and again. Mahiraja came to Hastinapura and sent a message to Krishnamsa. He explained everything to him and immediately with five hundred warriors

Krishnamsa went to Sahyadri mountain and said fearlessly: “O best of the demons, please listen. Your father Bibhishana is a great devotoee, and you are the dear son of him, therefore, you should not act in this manner (sinfully) which is the cause of the destruction of family. Do you remember, long ago mother Sita was kidnapped by Ravana and what happened to him?”

The rakshasa said, "Previously she was the daughter of a Gandharva and my beloved wife, but because of a curse by a sage she took birth on the earthly planet. Therefore, feeling her separation I went to Madrakesa. Although I stayed there so many days, being afraid of the king I could not kidnap her. Now she is in my control, but if you defeat me in battle you can take her back. Then Krishnamsa started fighting with him with a sword and it went on for seven nights. Finally he defeated the rakshasa, and with Kantimati came back to Delhi to see Mahiraja. The king (Mahiraja) offered 10,000,000 golden coins to the great Krishnamsa. Then he came to Pramdavana, or the forest called Pramoda, with his friends.

Suta Goswami said: There was a powerful king named Purnamala in Pattana. He worshipped the Vasus for five years and received a benediction from them. By their blessings he had ten sons and a daughter named Vidyun mala. For the marriage of his daughter he invited king Mahiraja and with seven million soldiers he gave his daughter to the son of Mahiraja (Bhima).

Bhima came back happily to his home (Hastinapura) with his beautiful wife. Then the king of paisaca-dasa, Sahoda, came with ten-thousand mlecchas to get Vidyunmala. They came to Kurukshetra by the order of Bali, the grandson of Prahlada Maharaja. They broke the deities of gods, killed so many cows and in the places of sacred water they put cow-blood. Sahoda, the mleccha king, wrote a letter and sent it to Mahiraja. King Mahiraja answered: "O mleccha king, you are the master of the mlecchasi, why are you worried about Vidyunmala? You should know that I’m the one who can shoot arrows just by hearing a sound and I’m the central point of the country of the thieves."

Then the king went to Kurukshetra with three million soldiers. There was a large, terrible fight between them. At night in the month of Jesta (July), Bali Maharaja came from Patala, the lowest region with ten-thousand demons and killed the soldiers of the king very quickly, eating them again and again. The king, being afraid took shelter of goddess Sarasvati. After that immediately Krishnamsas arrived and killed the ten-thousand demons. They came to Bali, the lord of the demons, and pleased him with their words.

Then Baliraja said: I’m very pleased with you, now you can ask for any benediction.

They said: These demons should never come to Aryadesha (India) with you, all of you should stay always in mleccha-desha and eat the followers of mleccha-dharma.

Baliraja became upset hearing these fearful, terrible words.

Then Krishnamsa said: as long as I'm in this world you should simply stay in your home, after that you come here and do whatever you like".

Hearing this the mleccha king Sahoda went back to Rasatala, the sixth lowest region of demons.

[From Pratisarga Parva, 4th Part, Chapter 6.]

The sage (Saunka) said: "O great fortunate one, you know everything please tell us about the kings who came after Mahiraja.

Suta Goswami said: The ghostly Kutukoddina, with human nature, was situated in the kingdom of Delhi. The best king Bhapasena, the grandson of Virasena was situated in the beautiful city of Aligarh. This city was protected by yadavas. Kutukaddin with ten-thousand warriors went there and defeated him and returned to Delhi. Then so many kings form other countries came there and defeated him and rejected him from their countries. When Shahoddina heard this, he came to Delhi, conquered the kings and broke all the deities. After that so many mlecchas came from all sides and ruled the kingdom for 5, 6 or 7 years. They had destroyed the places of pilgrimage and the temples, therefore as a reaction they become short-lived. From today, the mleccha kings will continue for a hundred years, therefore O sages, you should quickly go to Vishala (Badarikashrama) with me.

Then all the sages sadly left this place (Naimisaranya) and went to Vishala, the best of the Himalayas and meditated upon Lord Hari, being in samadhi (trance). And after a hundred years all of them attained the kingdom of God.

11.5The Prediction of Nimbarka Acharya

[From the 7th chapter of the Pratisarga Parva.]

The sun god, being pleased by the praise of the demigods, said: By the order of the Lord Krishna, Sudarshana will take birth in the Dvapara-yuga, and will be known as Nimbaditya (Nimbarka). He will be able to remove the declination of religious principles.

Suta Goswami said: Now you hear about the pastimes of the great Nimbarka. Lord Krishna personally ordered him to appear on the auspicious bank of Narmada river, which flows to the southern side of mountain Meru. That state is known as Tailanga, the place used by the devarsis, the godly sages.

Lord Krishna said: "You receive knowledge from devarsi Narada and establish the true principles of religion. You should remain in Mathura, Naimisaranya and Dvaraka."

Lord Sudarshana accepted the order of Lord Krishna sarying, "Yes," and appeared on the earth to fulfill the desires of the devotees. There was a broad-minded holy brahmana living in the auspicious state of Tailanga. His name was Aruna and was well versed in the Vedas and Vedangas. His wife was known as Jayanti. They were living an austere life like the sages. The brilliant luster of Sudarshana suddenly entered in the heart of Jayanti, and by that luster she looked brilliant like the moon. When the time arrived with all auspiciousness and good qualities, in Gaura paksha purnima of Kartika month, Vrisha rasi, the moon in Krittika, the five grahas (planets) situated in higher places, in the evening at the time of sunset, in Masa-lagna, the Lord of the universe (Sudarshana), who engaged the whole universe in Vedic religion, appeared from mother Jayanti (as Nimbarka).

One day Lord Brahma went to Nimbarka's ashrama just before the sunset and said: O brahmana, I'm very hungry, as long as the sun is in the sky, please give me something to eat. (I will not eat after the sun sets). The brahmana (Nimbarka) gave him food and while he was eating the sun went down. Then the brahmana by his power kept a sudarshana on a nimbe tree. Lord Brahma wondered seeing that sunlike shine and paid his obeisances to the brahmana by lying flat on the ground. Pleased with his austerity Lord Brahma said: Excellent. You will become famous on this earth, and you will be known as Nimbaditya (Nimbarka - One who made the sun appear from a Neem tree).

11.6The Prediction of Madhva and Sridhara

[From the 7th chapter of the Pratisarga Parva.]

Brihaspati said: Long ago, during the age of treta, O Indra, there was a brahmana named Shakrasharma, in Ayodhya. He worshipped demigods such as the Asvini Kumaras, Rudras, Vasus, and Surya with the mantras mentioned in the Yajur-veda. After worshipping, he satisfied them by offering oblations every day. Thus being pleased with his worship all the 330 million demigods awarded him all desired objects and even the rarest things. By the benediction of the demigods the brahmana lived on this earth for ten-thousand years without getting old and having no disturbance. After leaving his body he become the Sun-god and predominated the sun planet for one hundred thousand years, before going to Brahmaloka. He spent eight thousand celestial years for visiting the higher planets and then returned to the sun planet.

Hearing this, Lord Indra with his sober intelligence began to worship the sun-god along with other demigods in the month of June-July. On the purnima, the full moon day, the sun-god came down to the earth and said to demigods: I will take birth in Kali-yuga in Vrindavana and this brahmana will execute favorable acts for the demigods. He will be born as a son of Madhava, named Madhu and follow the Vedic path.

Suta Gosvami said: Saying this the sun-god created a light from his body and sent it to Vrindavana. Attracting all the irreligious people with pleasing speech he gave them Vaishnavi-shakti or the spiritual energy of Lord Vishnu, the bestower of enjoyment and liberation. Thus he become famous, known as Madhvacarya.

Jiva said: In the age of Dvapara, there was a brahmana named Megha Sharma. He was very much religious, intelligent, learned and a follower of the Vedic path. He was engaged in farming, and with the ten percent profit from farming he was worshipping the demigods every day with devotion. Once there was no rain during the administration of Maharaja Shantanu for five years, but the farm of Megha sharma was about four miles wider and was watered by rain. Naturally the grain-rate increased and Megha sharma became rich by taking advantage of the scarcity. Other people being so distressed took shelter of the king. The king called Megha sharma and said: O great brahmana, I offer my obeisances unto you, please became my Guru and guide us, so that we can be free from the scarcity.

Megha sharma said: when the month of Shravana (July-August) starts, you should call twelve Vedic brahmanas to chant one-hundred thousand times the mantra of the sun-god with the proper mind. Then on the full moon day (purnima) offer one tenth the number of oblations in the sacrificial fire, through the brahmanas. If you could do this as mentioned, you will become free from anxiety. So the king performed accordingly and fed all the brahmanas, then the sun-god being pleased by this poured heavy rain on the earth from all sides. After this king Shantanu, engaged in performing Surya-vrata and become a greatly pious person. Whoever he touched with his hand immediately turned to a young man. By the mercy of the sun-god, Meghasarma lived for five-hundred years, being freed from old age, and then went to sun-planet. After 100,000 years he will attain Brahmaloka. While he was speaking thus, sun-god revealed his identity to Jiva and went to Prayaga (Allahabad) and being in a happy mood he said to the demigods: “In kali-yuga, when the mlecchas will be ruling the kingdom, I will come to Vrindavana and preach for the mission of the Devas."

Suta said: Then the sun-god descended in Vrindavana as a son of Deva-sharma, named Sridhara. He studied Srimad Bhagavatam very deeply and a great commentary on it which is known as Sridhar-bhasya, the commentary of Sridhara.

11.7The Prediction of Jayadeva Gosvami

Brihaspati said: Long ago there was a brahmana named Heli, in the beautiful city Pampapura. He was a worshipper of the sun-god and he knew the 64 arts. He avoided the mood of accepting dakshina (donations) and he became an artist, having established a workshop for clothes, paintings, pictures, metal statues etc. He spent five thousand coins to establish it. Whatever profit he made he used for worshipping the sun-god in the month of Magha (January-February) by performing sacrifices. Thus the sun-god Vishvakarma (the architect

of the gods) became pleased with this sacrifice and descended on the top of a big pillar in Pampasarovara, the lake named Pampa, having a brilliant shining form. At the noon time, Heli offered food to the sun-god according to his desire. In this way he satisfied the three worlds. After leaving his body he entered into the sun-planet. Therefore O king of devas you may worship the sun-god, he will help you.

Suta said: Lord Indra hearing this from his guru, began to worship the sun-god Visvakarma along with other demigods. Thus being pleased with their worship Tvashta (Visvakarma) said: O gods, please listen to my words, I will appear in a village named Bilvagram in Bengal, and I will be the poet known as Jayadeva, the compiler of Nirukti. Saying this the sun-god went to Bengal and took birth in the house of a brahmana named Kanduke. When he was just five years old, he was engaged in the service of his parents and continued for twelve years. After sometime his parents left their body and Jayadeva did all the final ceremonies (Shraddha) in Gaya. Being satisfied they went to heaven. Then Jayadeva lived in a jungle as a detached brahmana.

At the age of twenty three, a brahmana (someone) offered his beautiful daughter to Lord Jagannatha. At the end of his worship the eternal Lord Aniruddha, having the form of Darubrahma, directly spoke thus: “O Satyavrata, please listen to Me, it is my order that you offer your daughter Padmavati to Jayadeva because he is the body of Mine, or he is as good as Me.” Then he found the detached brahmana (Jayadeva) and leaving his daughter in front of him, he went to his home. Padmavati served her husband for so many years accepting him as a beautiful and learned one. Jayadeva compiled a book known as Nirukta, the Vedic vocabulary, one of the six Vedangas. There were five kinds of Niruktas, but in Kali-yuga they were destroyed by the evil people and Prakrit-bhasha or the illiterate language was established. For the sake of the demigods, Panini the author of Ashtadhyayi grammar, overtook them and established the pure Sanskrit languagae.

Once the evil minded Kali situated in the hearts of thieves, plundered all the money of the brahmana Jayadeva which was given to him by the king. Following this they cut both his hands and legs and went home leaving Padmavati aside. Jaydeva was thrown into a ditch. Padmavati took him out cried and lamented again and again seeing the situation of her husband.

One day, when the king Dharmapala was out hunting. He saw the sage Jayadeva without hands and feet and asked: “Who put you in such a condition?”

Jayadeva answered: “No one put me in this condition, O king. It is due to my previous activities that I am suffering now in this abominable condition."

Having heard this statement, the religious king put the brahmana on a palanquin along with his wife and brought them to his palace. The king built a dharma-shala, religious institution, after receiving instructions from Jayadeva.

One day those same thieves, dressed as Vaishnavas came to the king and said: “We are very much expert in the scriptures and therefore we have come to you. O best of the kings, Lord Vishnu, while being in the stone (Shalagrama) eats food cooked by us everyday with love. If you don’t believe us, you can see this right here.”

Saying thus the slaves of kali by their power showed the king a four handed form of Lord Vishnu eating. Being struck with wonder, king Dharmapala said to Jayadeva: “O my gurudeva, some vaishnavas, the devotees of Lord Vishnu have come to my palace, and they have shown me the Lord before my very eyes, therefore please come quickly."

The theives saw Jayadeva and became struck with wonder. They said to the king in a joking mood: “O king, this brahmana was a cook in the palace of the king of Gaudadesa (Bengal). Once he became very much greedy for money and he mixed some poison in the food and offered it to a king. When the king come to know about it he ordered him to be crucified. Then we came to him (Jayadeva), and knowing him to be an offender, we instructed him in the Vedic knowledge. Then the king refused to crucify him, but he cut off his hands and legs. At that time the king became our disciple, having been enlightened by us.”

While they were speaking thus, the earth broke in two and those thieves fell within the earth, being sent to the lowest hell known as patala-loka. Jayadeva began to cry to the thieves and while he was crying his hands and legs appeared to be as they were. Then he explained to the bewildered king what had happened. The king became very happy after hearing everything from him. Jayadeva wrote a song called Gita-Govinda, the song sung for the pleasure of Lord Govinda. The king read the song and attained liberation. “O brahmanas, thus I have narrated the birth story of Jayadeva, now you listen about how the Supreme Lord appeared as Sri Krishna Chaitanya ."

[From Pratisarga Parva, 4th Part, Chapter 6.]

The sage (Saunka) said: "O great fortunate one, you know everything please tell us about the kings who came after Mahiraja.

Suta Goswami said: The ghostly Kutukoddina, with human nature, was situated in the kingdom of Delhi. The best king Bhapasena, the grandson of Virasena was situated in the beautiful city of Aligarh. This city was protected by yadavas. Kutukaddin with ten-thousand warriors went there and defeated him and returned to Delhi. Then so many kings form other countries came there and defeated him and rejected him from their countries. When Shahoddina heard this, he came to Delhi, conquered the kings and broke all the deities. After that so many mlecchas came from all sides and ruled the kingdom for 5, 6 or 7 years. They had destroyed the places of pilgrimage and the temples, therefore as a reaction they become short-lived. From today, the mleccha kings will continue for a hundred years, therefore O sages, you should quickly go to Vishala (Badarikashrama) with me.

Then all the sages sadly left this place (Naimisaranya) and went to Vishala, the best of the Himalayas and meditated upon Lord Hari, being in samadhi (trance). And after a hundred years all of them attained the kingdom of God.

12 Kurma Purana

Lord Vishnu, in Kurm Avatar (tortoise incarnation), had first preached this Purana to Narad. In his turn, Narad narrated it to Sutji who later narrated this Purana to an assembly of the great sages. Initially, this Purana had four parts namely Bramhi Samhita, Bhagawati Samhita, Gauri Samhita and Vaishnavi Samhita. Presently, however, none of these Samhitas is available except Brahm Samhita. Present version too contains two parts-Purv and Uttar Parts.

Purv Part: Tale of Indradyumna. Description of Kurm Purana. Description of Varnashram. Description of the sequence of these ashramas. Origin of the geo-sphere. Description of various incarnations. Preaching of the gods. Description of the self-begotten Manu. Destruction of Daksh's yagya. Killing of Hiranyakashipu. Vamana avatar (dwarf incarnation). Description of Ikshvaku clan. Description of Pururava clan. Description of Rama and Krishna incarnations. Description of Satya-, Treta-, Dwapar- and Kali yugas. Greatness of Varanasi. Greatness of Lingas. Greatness of Prayag and Yamuna etc.

Uttar Part: Yoga of unexpressed knowledge. Appearance of Devadidev (Rudra) during Tandava. Description of metaphysical knowledge. Preaching of metaphysical knowledge by the God. Description of Ashtang Yoga. Duties of a celibate. Duties of a graduate. Description of edible and non-edible things. Rituals to be performed regularly. Rituals of dining. Description of the duties of a Vanaprasthi. Duties of an ascetic. Description of expiation. Expiation for drinking of wine. Greatness of different places of pilgrimage.

This Purana consists of 35 chapters:

12.1Introduction

(The samudra manthana story is given in great detail in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. As for Lakshmi, some of the Puranas state that she was born as the daughter of Khyati and the sage Bhrigu. She was then married to Vishnu. But the demons defeated the gods and Indra. The sage Durvasa therefore cursed Lakshmi that she would have to live in the ocean. And when the ocean was churned, Lakshmi emerged yet again.)

Indra, the other gods, and the sages were charmed at Lakshmi's beauty when she appeared. "Who is this wonderful goddess?" they asked Vishnu.

"This is Lakshmi," replied Vishnu. "She is also known as Shakti. It is with her help that I delude the universe and its inhabitants with my illusions (maya). It is Lakshmi who gives me all my powers, although she is no different from me in essence."

Vishnu then proceeded to tell the gods and the sages the story of Indradyumna.

12.2 Indradyumna

Many years ago, there was a king named Indradyumna. He ruled the world well and, when he died, was reborn as a brahmana, (The brahmanas constitute the first of the four classes, their primary duties are to study the Vedas and perform sacrifices.)

As a brahmana, Indradyumna observed religious rites and meditated. He also stared to pray to the goddess Lakshmi. When Lakshmi appeared, Indradyumna begged of her, "Please tell me about yourself. Please give me insight into what constitutes true knowledge."

"Even the gods and the sages are unable to comprehend my true nature," replied Lakshmi. "I an Vishnu's illusions and there is no difference between him and me. As for knowledge, it is beyond my powers to grant you that. You will have to pray to the great Vishnu himself."

Having said this, Lakshmi disappeared, and Indradyumna started to pray to Vishnu. Several years passed, but Indradyumna continued to meditate. Finally, Vishnu appeared and instructed Indradyumna on the path to true knowledge.

"What did you tell Indradyumna?" asked the gods and the sages. "What was this wonderful knowledge?"

"I will repeat it for your benefit," replied Vishnu.

Since Vishnu repeated his teachings while in the form of a turtle of Kurma, these sacred words are known as the Kurma Purana. There are many subjects that Vishnu's instructions covered, but let us first start with the concept of varnashrama dharma, Dharma means righteousness and these precepts lay down the fundamental principles of righteous conduct. This is typified in the system of four varnas (classes) and four ashramas (stages of life).

12.3 Varnashrama Dharma

Vishnu said that before creation began, there was only water in the universe and Vishnu slept on these waters. When it was time for creation to begin, Brahma emerged from Vishnu's body. And Shiva emerged from Vishnu's anger. Lakshmi too was created from Vishnu's body and took her place by Vishnu's side.

Brahma told Vishnu, "Please use this goddess to delude the beings whom I will create. Tell her to sow the seeds of illusions in their minds. Please tell her to make the righteous prosper."

Vishnu complied. He requested Lakshmi, "Please delude and destroy gods, demons and humans who are about to be created. But please leave the righteous alone and make them prosper. I will tell you how to know the righteous. They are those that follow the precepts of varnashrama dharma."

The brahmanas constitute the first of the four classes. Brahma created nine sons from his mental powers. Their names were Marichi, Bhrigu, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Daksha, Atri and Vashishtha. These sons became sages and they were the first brahmanas. They were created from Brahma's mouth There are six types of action that are recommended for brahmanas. These are yajana (performing sacrifices), yajana (acting as priests at sacrifices), dana (donation of alms), pratigraha (receiving gifts), adhyapana (teaching and adhyayana (studying). A brahmana who performs these tasks well, attains the wonderful place known as prajapatya. (This would seem to be synonymous with Brahma's residence of Brahmaloka).

The kshatriyas constitute the second of the four classes. They were created from Brahma's arms. The duties of kshatriyas include dana (donation of alms), adhyayana (studying) and performing yajnas (sacrifices). But their primary duties are to take up arms and fight, It is their job to punish the evil and protect the good. A kshatriya who performs these tasks well, attains Indra's residence of Indraloka.

The vaishyas constitute the third of the four classes. They were created from Brahma's thighs. Like the kshatriyas, the vaishyas can also donate alms, study and perform sacrifices, But their primary duty is agriculture, (In many other Puranas, trade and animal husbandry are mentioned in addition to agriculture). A vaishya who performs these tasks well, gets to live with Vayu, the god of the wind.

The shudras constitute the last of the four classes. They were created from Brahma's feet. Their primary duty is to serve the other three classes. In addition, a shudra can adopt artisanship as an occupation, A shudra who performs these tasks well, will live with the gandharvas (singers of heaven).

Generally speaking, all four classes have to observe the religion that is prescribed in the vedas. There are various other shastras (religious texts) that circulate on earth. But many of them are against the Vedas. The religion that is prescribed in such anti-Vedic texts must not be followed. Only sinners follow such religions, and they are doomed to eternal damnation.

There are four ashramas (stages of life). The first one is brahmacharya (celibate studenthood). The primary duties of a person who is in this stage of life are studying the Vedas and serving one's guru (teacher) well. He has to live on alms that are obtained through begging. When this stage of life if over, there are two options that are available to the individual. In rare instances, he may desire to devote the rest of his life to studying and meditation. Such a person is known as naishthika. More commonly, individuals wish to step into the next stage of life, An individual who does so is known as an upakurvana.

The second stage of life is garhasthya (householder stage). A householder's primary duties are serving guests, performing sacrifices, donating alms, worshipping the gods and keeping the sacred fire burning in the house at all times. In cases where the householder is absent from the house, these functions are to be performed by his wife or sons, or even by his priest. A householder must not also forget to study a little bit of the Vedas every day. The householder stage is superior to the other three stages of life. The reason is that the alms provided by a householder are the means of sustenance for individuals who are in the other three stages of life. A householder may be one of two types. He may be a sadhaka, in which case his chief obsession is that of satisfying his friends and relatives. Alternatively, there may be a householder who is udasina. This means that he is not really interested in his wife, his sons or in the acquisition of material wealth. His chief obsession is that of being freed from the bonds of the world.

The third stage of life is vanaprastha (forest dwelling stage). Such a person retires to the forest and lives on fruits and roots. He studies the Vedas, performs tapasya (meditation) and observes religious rites. One should never embark on a forest-dwelling stage unless one's mind is ready for it. This also means that one must have had sons. Without sons to carry on the line, it is not recommended that a householder venture out on the forest-dwelling stage. There are two types of forest-dwellers. The first type consists of individuals who primarily devote themselves to worshipping the gods and performing religious ceremonies. Such an individual is known as a tapasya, because he does do some tapasya. But there are individuals who devote themselves entirely to meditation. Such a person is known as a sannyasika, since there is very little of difference between him and a sannyasi (hermit).

The fourth and final stage of life is sannyasa (hermithood). Such individuals spend all their time in meditating. They beg food for a living. It is not proper to become a hermit unless one's mind has achieved detachment from the world. There are two types of hermits. The first type consists of those who are trying to realise the true nature of the atman (human soul). Such a person treats all other individuals as he would treat himself and is known as a yogi, but there are also hermits who go through intense meditation so as to attain the supreme wisdom. Such a person is known as a parameshthika.

There are various other traits that are demanded by the righteous way of life. One must forgive and display pity, one must not be jealous and must be ready to sacrifice one's own selfish interests. One must be truthful, practice non-violence and learn to control the senses. One must also visit tirthas (places of pilgrimage). It is also important to realise that one does not perform actions for the sake of the fruits of the actions. The fruits of all actions vest with the brahman (the divine essence). In fact, it is a gross misconception to think that la specific action is being performed by an individual. All actions are performed by the brahman, the ordinary human being is merely an instrument. As long as this

realisation is missing, an individual is ignorant and is doomed to the shackles of worldly bonds.

12.4 Creation

Vishnu next narrated to the gods and the sages the history of creation.

In the beginning, the brahman was everywhere. The brahman had no form, but nor was it without form. It had no beginning and no end. It had no traits, but nor was it without traits. The brahman is impossible to describe, sense or see.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are derived from the brahman, Brahma performs the function of a creator, Vishnu that of a preserver and Shiva that of destroyer.

When it was time for creation to begin, the brahman created water throughout the universe. Before that, there was nothing. In the water, there appeared a golden (hiranya) egg (anda). The egg grew in size and Brahma, the creator, appeared inside the egg. Everything that there is in the universe, was already there, in in embryonic form, inside the egg. There were gods, the demons humans, the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets and the wind. The word garbha means womb and since Brahma originated from inside a golden (hiranya) egg, he is known as Hiranyagarbha. Brahma was the first being to be created. He had four faces. He had no birth (janana) in the real sense of the term. He is therefore also referred to as Aja (without birth). It is also true that he created (bhuva) himself (svayam). It is because of this that Brahma is known as Svayambhu. Brahma was to be the lord (pati) of all the subjects who were going to be born (praja). Thus, Brahma acquired the name of Prajapati.

To appreciate how creation took place, it is first necessary to have some conception about the nature of time.

12.5 A Digression on Time

The smallest unit of time is a nimesha. Fifteen nimeshas make one kashtha, thirty kashthas are one kala and thirty kalas constitute one muhurta. There are thirty muhurtas in a span of day and night (ahoratra). Thirty such ahoratras make up a month. There are two pakshas (fortnight) in every month. Six months constitute an ayana and two ayanas a year. There are thus twelve months in every year. The names of the two ayanas are uttarayana and dakshinayana, While humans pass through uttarayana, the gods pass through only one day. Similarly, when humans pass through dakshinayana, the gods pass through merely one night. One year for humans is equivalent to a time span of one day and one night for the gods.

Twelve thousand years of the gods make up one mahayuga. This is subdivided into four yugas (eras). The names of these eras are satya yuga or krita yuga, treta yuga, dvapara yuga and kali yuga. Satya yuga has four thousand years, treta yuga three thousand, dvapara yuga two thousand and kali yuga one thousand. This adds up to ten thousand years. But there are also periods that

join two yugas: (sandhyamsha). Satya yuga has a sandhyamsha of four hundred years, treta yuga of three hundred, dvapara yuga of two hundred and kali yuga of one hundred, There will therefore be seven hundred additional years between satya yuga and treta yuga, five hundred between treta yuga and dvapara yuga of two hundred and kali yuga of one hundred. There will therefore be seven hundred additional years between satya yuga and treta yuga, five hundred between treta yuga and dvapara yuga, three hundred between dvapara yuga and kali yuga and five hundred between kali yuga and the next satya yuga. These are two thousand additional years, and when added up to the earlier figure of ten thousand. make up twelve thousand years.

There are a little over seventy-one manvantaras (eras) in each mahayuga. Each manvantara is a time period that is ruled over by a Manu. The first Manu in the present kalpa (cycle) was Svayambhuva Manu and there were several other Manus after him. Each kalpa in fact passes during one of brahma's days and there are fourteen manvantaras in a kalpa. Stated differently, there are one thousand mahayugas in every kalpa.

Three hundred and sixty kalpas constitute one of brahma's years. One hundred times this time period is known as a parardha. At the end of this period, the whole universe is destroyed and Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are also destroyed. At the end of the destruction, creation starts afresh and this creation is known as sarga.

There is a smaller process of destruction that takes place at the end of every kalpa. Brahma Vishnu and Shiva are not destroyed, but everything else is. The creation that comes at the end of this minor destruction is known as pratisarga.

The present kalpa is known as varaha kalpa. The one that preceded it was known as padma kalpa.

"Why is the present kalpa called varaha kalpa?" the gods and the sages asked Vishnu.

Vishnu told them the story of his boar incarnation.

12.6The Boar Incarnation

A varaha is a boar and the boar incarnation is usually catalogued as the third of Vishnu's ten incarnations.

When the universe was submerged in water after the destruction that came at the end of padma kalpa, Vishnu slept on the waters. Thus he slept for a thousand mahayugas. Since the word nara means water and ayana means resting-place, Vishnu is also referred to as Narayana.

Brahma decided to start creation afresh, but discovered that the earth was submerged in water. How would his creations survive if there was no earth? He therefore requested Vishnu to bring the earth up from under the water.

Vishnu adopted the form of a boar and went to the underworld. He discovered the earth there and raised her up on the tusks of the boar. The boar carefully raised the earth and laid her to rest on top of the water. The earth began to float like a gigantic boat.

Since Vishnu raised the earth in the form of a boar at the beginning of the kalpa, the present cycle is known as varaha kalpa.

(The story of the boar incarnation is rather summarily disposed of in the Kurma Purana. The other Puranas describe it at great length. Apart from the question of raising up the earth from under the water, the story revolves around the demon Hiranyaksha. this demon was the son of the sage Kashyapa and his wife Diti. He defeated the gods and drove them out of heaven. In desperation, the gods started to pray to Vishnu. Hiranyaksha used to live under the water and Vishnu entered the water in his form of a boar and killed Hiranyaksha. He also recovered the Vedas which had been stolen by Hiranyaksha.)

12.7 Creation Continued

Brahma first created five sons through his mental powers. Their names were Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana, Kratu and Sanatakumara These five sons became sages and did not have any offspring. Brahma therefore had to create some more beings so that the population of the universe might increase. But prior to that, he decided to perform tapasya. However, the meditation did not yield him any results and Brahma became very angry and disheartened. He started to weep and a teardrop fell on the ground. From this drop, there emerged Shiva.

Brahma bowed before Shiva and said, “Please create some living beings.”

This Shiva proceeded to do. But all the beings that Shiva created were mirror images of himself. That is, they were all immortal.

“I beg your pardon,” retorted Shiva. “That I refuse to do. Old age and disease are not objects that should be sought after. In fact, they are evil. I flatly refuse to create such evil.”

“All right then.” said Brahma. “I will take care of creation myself. Please stop creating.”

The first objects that Brahma created were water, fire, the sky, heaven (svarga), wind, rivers, mountains, oceans, trees, herbs and time.

Brahma next created eleven sons from his mental powers. Their names were Marichi, Bhrigu, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Daksha, Atri Vashishtha, Dharma and Sankalpa.

(In the earlier section on varnashrama dharma, only nine sons were mentioned. Dharma and Sankalpa did not figure in that list.)

Thereafter, Brahma created four classes of beings. These were gods, demons, ancestors (pitris) and humans. The demons were born from Brahma's thighs, the gods from his mouth. The snakes (sarpa), the yakshas (demi-gods), the ghosts (bhuta) and the gandharvas were born next. Cows were born from Brahma's stomach, and horses, elephants, donkeys, deer, camels and mules from his feet. Herbs and trees emerged from Brahma's body-hair.

(This account contradicts a more common account given in some of the other Puranas, such as the Bhagavata Purana. In the more usual account, all beings are descended from the sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa married thirteen of Daksha's daughters. These daughters were named Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kashtha, Arishtha, Surasa, Ila, Muni, Krodhavasha, Tamra, Surabhi, Sarama and Timi. Aditi's offspring were the gods (adityas), Diti's the demons (daityas). Danu's offspring were other demons (danavas), Kashtha's children horses, Arishtha's gandharvas, Surasa's demons (rakshasas), Ila's offspring trees and herbs, Muni's the apsaras (dancers of heaven), Krodhavasha's ghosts (pishachas), Tamra's birds, Surabhi's cattle, Sarama's wild animals and Timi's marine creatures. The Kurma Purana itself refers to this alternative account subsequently).

To return to the present account of the Kurma Purana, Brahma thereafter divided his body into two. One half was male and was called Svayambhuva Manu. The remaining half was female and was called Shatarupa. Manu and Shatarupa married and had two sons and two daughters. The sons were named Priyavrata and Uttanapada and the daughters were named Prasuti and Akuti. Since all humans are Manu's descendants, they are known as manava.

Prasuti married Daksha and they had twenty-four daughters. (The Puranas are not at all consistent about the number of daughters Prasuti and Daksha had. The number is sometimes twenty-four, sometimes fifty and sometimes sixty). Thirteen of the twenty-four daughters were married to Brahma's son Dharma. Of the remaining eleven, Khyati was married to Bhrigu, Sati to Shiva, Sambhuti to Marichi, Smriti to Angira, Priti to Pulastya, Kshama to Pulaha, Sannati to Kratu, Anasuya to Atri, Urjja to Vashishtha, Svaha to the fire-god Agni and Svadha to the ancestors (pitris).

12.8Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva

The gods and the sages told Vishnu, "We are getting a bit confused. You have told us that Brahma emerged from Vishnu's body And yet you have also told us how Brahma was born inside a golden egg. Which of these is the correct

account? Then again, you have told us that Shiva was born from one of Brahma's tears. But we have sometimes heard otherwise. Which is right? Please remove this confusion."

"There is no confusion," replied Vishnu. "Let me explain it for you."

Brahma was born from the golden egg right at the beginning, at the time of the original creation. But at the end of every kalpa there is a minor destruction when all living beings other than Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva die. When the destruction is over, creation has to start afresh.

At the end of the last kalpa, there was water everywhere in the universe. The heaven, the earth and the underworld, were all flooded with water. There were no gods and no sages. Only the great Vishnu slept on the water. He had a thousand hoods, a thousand eyes, a thousand arms and a thousand feet. This was his form of Ananta, the snake (naga).

(The Kurma Purana completely identifies Vishnu with Ananta. More commonly, the Puranas state that the snake Ananta was the son of Kadru and the sage Kashyapa. He pleased Brahma through his prayers and obtained from Brahma the boon that he would be permitted to hold up the earth on his hoods. The Kalika Purana specifically states that, at the time of destruction, Vishnu and Lakshmi rest on Ananta's central hood. The Vishnu Purana adds the information that Ananta was one of Balarama's avataras. The names Shesha Vasuki and Gonasa are often used synonymously with Ananta.)

While Vishnu thus slept on the water, a wonderful lotus sprouted from his navel. the lotus was gigantic and shone like the sun. Its fragrance spread in all directions. Brahma appeared inside the lotus. Since padma means lotus and yoni means place of Birth, Brahma is also known as Padmayoni.

Brahma saw Vishnu sleeping on the water and woke him up. "Who are you?" asked Brahma.

"I am Vishnu." replied Vishnu. "I am the origin of everything. That will be there in the universe is inside my body."

"Is that really so?" asked Vishnu. "Let me see."

Vishnu thereupon entered Brahma's body. He really found the three worlds, the gods, the demons and the humans inside Brahma's stomach and was greatly surprise. He emerged from Brahma's mouth and told Brahma, "What I have seen inside your body is truly wonderful. But I too can show you many worlds inside my body. Please enter and see for yourself."

It was now Brahma's turn to enter Vishnu's body. But when Brahma did this, he could find no end to Vishnu's stomach. It was true that there were many worlds

inside Vishnu's body. However, Brahma could find no way of coming out from Vishnu's stomach. He finally jab to emerge through Vishnu's navel, through the stalk of the lotus that was there.

"How dare you try to confine me inside your body?" demanded Brahma, as soon as he managed to get out.

"Please do not get angry." replied Vishnu. "I merely thought that I would play with you for a while. Otherwise, it is inconceivable that anyone should dare to confine the great Brahma. Please pardon me. And as a token of your pardon, please grant me the boon that henceforth, you will be known as my son. After all, you did emerge from a lotus that grew out of my navel."

"Agreed." said Brahma. "Let us make peace. After all; there is no one else. We are the lords of everything, we are parts of the brahman."

"Please do not forget Shiva," responded Vishnu. "Your words will anger him and bring about your undoing."

While the two were thus conversing, Shiva appeared on the scene. He had a third eye in the middle of his forehead and his hair was matted. A trident could be seen in his hand.

"Who is this fellow?" asked Brahma. "He looks like an upstart."

Vishnu calmed Brahma down. He also gave Brahma divine eyes so that Brahma could comprehend the true nature of Shiva. Brahma then started to pray to Shiva. Pleased with Brahma's prayers, Shiva agreed to grant Brahma a boon.

"Please grant me the boon that you will be born as my son," said Brahma.

Shiva agreed to do so and went away.

12.9 Rudra

Brahma returned to his seat on the lotus flower.

Suddenly, two demons named Madhu and Kaitabha appeared, They were exceedingly strong and threatened to destroy everything that Brahma would create. Brahma therefore requested Vishnu to kill these two demons. Vishnu created two beings from his own body and these two beings killed the demons.

(The Madhu and Kaitabha story is given in greater detail in other Puranas, such as the Kalika Purana. While Vishnu was sleeping, the two demons were born from his ears. One of them desired to have some honey as soon as he was born, Since the word for honey is madhu, he came to be known as Madhu. The other one looked like an insect. Since the word for insect is kita, he came to be known as Kaitabha. these brothers attacked Brahma and Vishnu had to fight with them

so as to rescue Brahma. The fight went on for five thousand years before Vishnu could kill them. after the demons were killed, the fat (meda) from their bodies formed the earth. That is the reason why the earth is known as medini.)

After Madhu and Kaitabha had been killed, Brahma could start to create. He first created, through his mental powers, the sons whose names have earlier been mentioned. since Shiva had promised that he would be born as Brahma's son, Brahma decided to perform tapasya so as to accomplish this. He prayed for many years, but nothing happened. In utter frustration, Brahma began to cry. the ghosts (bhuta and preta) were born from these tears. Brahma was so disgusted at having created these awful creatures, that he committed suicide. It was then that Shiva was born from Brahma's mouth and Brahma revived.

(You will have noticed the contradiction. Earlier, it had been stated that Shiva was born from a teardrop and there had been no mention of Brahma's suicide, The suicide is not mentioned in other Puranas either, nor is there any mention of Shiva or Rudra being born from a teardrop. In the Vishnu Purana, he suddenly appeared in Brahma's lap. In the Padma Purana, he was born from Brahma's furrowed brows).

The baby started to cry as soon as he was born.

"Don't cry," said Brahma. "Since you cried when you were born, you will be known as Rudra."

(The Kurma Purana is not specific on why the baby cried. The other Puranas state that the baby cried for the want of a name. Brahma therefore gave the boy the name of Rudra, as the word rub means to cry. The boy continued to cry and Brahma gave him several other names as well. The Puranas however disagree about what these various names were).

In addition to Rudra, Brahma gave the boy the names Bhuva, Sarva, Ishana, Pashupati, Bhima, Ugra and Mahadeva. In these eight different forms, Shiva was to live in the sun, the water, the sky, the fire, the wind, the trees, the bodies of brahmanas and the moon.

12.10 Parvati's Thousand Names

Shiva was married to Daksha's daughter Sati. Sati died and was reborn as Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya and his wife Mena (alternatively, Menaka). Parvati was married to Shiva.

In fact, Himalaya and Mena prayed so that they might have the goddess as their daughter. Pleased with their prayers, the goddess arrived before Himalaya and Mena and showed them her divine form. She also promised them that she would be born as their daughter.

There were a thousand names of the goddess that Himalaya recited in the course of his prayers (one thousand and eight to be precise). These names are as follows. For convenience, we have reproduced them in groups of ten names each.

(1) Shiva, Uma, Paramashakti, Ananta, Nishkala, Amala, Shanta, Maheshvari, Nitya, Shashvati.

(2) Paramakshara, Achintya, Kevala, Shivatma, Paramatma, Anadi, Avyaya, Shuddha, Devatma, Sarvaga,

(3) Achala, Eka, Anekavibhagastha, Mayatita, Sunirmala, Mahamaheshvari, Satya, Mahadevi, Niranjana, Kashtha.

(4) Sarvantarastha, Chitshakti, Atilalasa, Nanda, Sarvvatmika, Vidya, Jyotirupa Amrita, Akshara, Shanti.

(5) Sarvvapratishtha, Nivritti, Amritaprada. Vyomamurti, Vyomalaya, Vyomadhara, Achyuta, Amara, Andinidhana, Amogha.

(6) Karanatma, Kalakula, Svatahprathamaja, Amritanabhi, Atmasamshraya, Praneshvarapriya, Mata, Mahamahishaghatini, Pranarupa, Pradhana-Purusheshvari.

(7) Sarvvashakti, Kalakara, Jyotsna, Sarvvakaryaniyantri, Sarvvabhuteshvari, Samsarayoni, Sakala, Sarvvashaktisamudbhava, Samsarapota, Durvara.

(8) Durnirikshya, Durasada, Pranashakti, Pranavidya, Yogini, Paramakala, Mahavibhuti, Durddharsha, Mulaprakritidsambhava.

(9) Anadyanantavitava, Paramaghapakarshini, Svargasthityan Tarakarani, Sudurvvachya, Duratyaya, Shabdayoni, Shabdamayi, Nadakhya, Nadvigraha, Anadi.

(10) Avyaktaguna, Mahanada, Sanatani, Akashayoni, Yogastha, Mahayogeshvareshvari, Mahamaya, Sudushpara, Mulaprakriti, Ishvari.

(11) Pradhanapurushatita, Pradhanapurushatmika, Purana, Chinmayi, Adipurusharupini, Bhutantavastha, Kutastha, Mahapurushasamjnita, Janmamrityujaratita, Sarvvashaktisamanvita.

(12) Vyapini, Anavachhinna, Pradhananu-Praveshinin, Kshetrajnashakti, Avyaktalakshana, Malavarjjita, Anadimayasambinna, Prakritigraha, Mahamayasamutpanna, Tamasi.

(13) Pourushi, Dheuva, Vyaktatmika, Krishna, Avyaktatmika, Rrakta, Shukla, Prasutika, Akarya, Karyajanani.

(14) Nityaprasavadharmini, Sargapralayanirmukta, Srishtisthityantadharmini, Brahmagarbha, Chaturvimsha, Padmanabha, Achyutatmika, Vaidyuti, Shashvati, Youni.

(15) Jaganmata, Ishvarapriya, Sarvvadhara, Maharupa, Sarvvaisharyasamannita, Vishvarupa, Mahagarbha, Vishveshechhanuvartini, Mahlyasi, Brahmayoni.

(16) Mahalakshmisamudbhava, Mahavimana-Madhyastha, Mahanidra, Atmahetuka, Sarvva-Sadharani, Sukshma, Avidya, Paramarthiki, Anantarupa, Anantastha.

(17) Purushamohini, Devi, Anekakarasamsthana, Kalatrayavivarjita, Brahmajanma, Harimurti, Brahmakhya, Brahmavishnu-Shivatmika, Brahmeshavishnujanani, Brahmasamshraya.

(18) Vyakta, Prathamaja, Brahmi, Mahati, Brahmarupini. Vairagyaishvaryadharmatma. Brahmamurti, Hridisthita, Apamyoni, Svayambhuti.

(19) Manasi, Tattvasambhava, Ishvarani, Sarvvani, Shankararddhasharirini, Bhavani, Rudrani, Mahalakshmi, Ambika, Maheshvara-Samutpanna.

(20) Bhuktimuktifalaprada, Sarvveshvari, Sarvvavandya, Nitamuditamanasa, Brahmendro-Pendranmita, Shankarechhanuvartini, Ishvararddhasanagata, Maheshvarapativrata, Sakridvibhata, Sarvvartisamudraparishoshini.

(21) Parvati, Himavatputri, Paramanadadyini, Gunadhya, Yogaja, Yogya, Jnanamurti, Vikashini, Savitri, Kamala.

(22) Lakshmi, Shri, Anantavakshahsthalasthita, Sarojanilaya, Ganga, Yoganidra, Asurardini Sarasvati, Sarvvavidya, Jagajjveyashtha.

(23) Sumangala, Vagdevi Varada, Avachya Kirti, Sarvvarthasadhika, Yogishvari, Brahmavidya, Mahavidya, Sushobhana.

(24) Guhyavidya, Atmavidya, Dharmavidya,Atmabhavita, Svaha, Vishvambhara, Siddhi, Svadha, Medha, Dhriti.

(25) Shruti, Niti, Suniti, Sukriti, Madhavi, Naravahini, Pujya, Vibhavati, Soumya, Bhogini.

(26) Bhogashayini, Shobha, Vamshakari, Lola, Manini, Parameshthini, Trailokyasundari, Ramya, Sundari, Kamacharini.

(27) Mahanubhava, Sattvastha, Mahamahisha-Mardini, Padmamala, Papahara, Vichitramukutangada, Kanta, Chitrambaradhara, Divyabharana-Bhushita.

(28) Hamsakhya, Vyomanilaya, Jagasrishtivivarddhini, Niyantri, Yantramadhyastha, Nandini, Bhadrakalika, Adityavarna, Koumari.

(29) Mayuravaravahana, Vrishasanagata, Gouri, Mahakali, Surarchita, Aditi, Niyata, Roudri, Padmagarbhavivahana.

(30) Virupakshi, Lelihana, Mahasuravinashini, Mahafala, Anavadyangi, Kamarupa, Vibhavari, Koushiki, Vichitraratnamukuta, Pranatarti-Prabhanjani.

(31) Karshani, Ratri, Tridashartivinashini, Vahurupa, Virupa, Surupa, Rupavarjita, Bhaktartishamani, Bhavya, Bhavatapavinashini.

(32) Nirguna, Nityavibhava, Nihsara, Nirapatrapa, Tapasvini, Samagiti, Bhavankanilayalaya, Diksha, Vidyadhari, Dipta.

(33) Manendrarinipatini, Sarvvatishayini, Vidya, Sarvvasiddhipradyini, Sarvveshvarapriya, Tarkshi, Samudrantaravasini, Akalanka, Niradhara.

(34) Nityashiddha, Niramaya, Kamadhenu, Vrihadgarbha, Dhimati, Mohanashini, Nihsankalpa, Niratanka, Vinaya.

(35) Vinayapriya, Jvalamalasahasradhya, Devadevi, Manomayi, Mahabhagavati, Bhaga, Vasudevasamudbhava, Mahendrapendrabhagini.

(36) Bhaktigamya, Paravara, Jnanajneya,Jaratita, Vedantavishaya, Gati, Dakshina, Dahana, Danta, Sarvvabhutanamaskrita.

(37) Yoganmaya, Vibhagajna, Mahamoha, Gariyasi, Sandhya, Brahmavidyashraya, Vijankurasamudhbuti, Mahashakti, Mahamati, Kshanti.

(38) Prajna, Chiti, Samvit, Mahabhogindra-Shayini, Vikriti, Shankari, Shanti, Ganagandharvasevita, Vaishvanari, Mahashala.

(39) Devasena, Guhapriya, Maharatri, Shivananda, Shachi, Duhsvapnanashini, Ijya, Pujya, Jagaddhatri, Durvineya.

(40) Surpini, Guhalvika, Gunotpatti, Mahapitha, Marutsuta, Havyavahantaragadi, Havyavahasa-Mudhbhava, Jagadyoni, Jaganmata, Janmamrityujaratiga.

(41) Vuddhi, Mahavuddhimati, Purushantaravasini, Tarasvini, Samadhistha, Trinetra, Divisamsthita, Sarvvendriyamanomata, Sarvvabhutahridisthita, Samsaratarini.

(42) Sattvashuddhikari, Shuddhi, Malatrayavinashini, Jagatpriya, Jaganmurti, Trimurti, Amritashraya, Nirashraya, Nirahara, Nirankushapododbhava.

(43) Surupa, Bhavini, Harini, Prabha, Unmilani, Sarvasaha, Sarvvapratyayasakshini, Susoumya, Chandravadana, Tandavasaktamanasa.

(44) Sativashuddhikari, Shuddhi, Malatrayavinashini, Jagatpriya, Jaganmurti, Trimurti, Amritashya, Nirashraya, Nirahara, Nirankushapadodbhava.

(45) Chakrahasta, Viochitrangi, Sragvini, Padmadharini, Paravaravidhanajna, Mahapuushapurvaja, Vishveshvarapriya, Vidyut, Vidyujjihva, Jitashrama.

(46) Vidyamayi, Sahaasrakshi, Sahasravadanatmaja, Sahasrarashmi, Sattvastha, Maheshvarapadashraya, Kshalini, Mrinmayi, Vyapta, Padmavodhika.

(47) Taijasi, Mahamayashraya, Manya, Mahadevamanorama, Vyomalakshmi, Simharatha, Chekitana, Amitaprabha, Vireshvari, Vimanastha.

(47) Taijasi, Mahamayashraya, Manya, Mahadevamanorama, Vyomalakshmi, Simharatha, Chekitana, Amitaprabha, Vireshvari, Vimanastha.

(48) Vishoka, Shokanashini, Anahata, Kundalini, Nalini, Padmabhasini, Sadananda, Sadakriti, Vagdevata, Sarvvabhutashrayasthita.

(49) Brahmakala, Vishnushivagraja, Paragati, Kshobhika, Bandhika, Bhedya, Bhedabhedavivarjita, Kalalita, Kalarani.

(50) Brahmashri, Brahmahridaya, Vyomashakti, Kriyashakti, Jamashakti, Abhinna, Bhinnasamsthana, Vashini, Vamshakarini, Guhyashakti.

(51) Gunatita, Sarvada, Sarvatomukhi, Bhagini, Bhagavatpatni, Sakala, Kalakarini, Sarvvavit, Sarvvatobhadra.

(52) Guhyatita, Guharani, Prakriya, Yogamata, Ganga, Vishveshareshvari, Kapila, Akapila, Kanta, Kamalabha.

(53) Kalantara, Punya, Pushkarini, Bhoktri, Puranadarapurahsara, Poshani, Paramaishvaryabhutida, Bhutibhushana, Panchabrahmasamutpatti.

(54) Paramarthavigraha, Dharmodaya, Bhanumati, Yogijneya, Manojava, Manorama, Manoraska, Tapasi, Vadarupini, Vedashakti.

(55) Vedamata, Vedavidyaprakashini, Yogeshvareshvari, Mata, Mahashakti, Manomayi, , Viyanmurti, Vidyunmala, Vihayasi.

(56) Kinnari, Surabhi, Vidya, Nandini, Nandivallabha, Bharati, Paramananda, Paraparavibhedika, Sarvvapraharanopeta, Kamya.

(57) Kameshvareshvari, Achintya, Anantavibhava, Bhulekha, Kanakaprabha, Kushmandi, Dhanaratnadhya, Sugandha, Gandhadayini, Trivikramapadodbhuta.

(58) Dhanushpani, Shivodaya, Sudurlabla, Dhanadhyaksha, Dhanya, Pingalalochana, Shanti, Prabhavati, Dipti, Pankajayatalochana.

(59) Adya, Hritamalodbhuta, Gomata, Ranapriya, Satkriya, Girisha, Shuddhi, Nityapushta, Nirantara, Durga.

(60) Katyayani, Chandi, Charichitanga, Suvigraha, Hiranyavarna, Jagati, Jagadyantrapravartika, Sarada, Mandaradrinivasa, Svarnamalini.

(61) Ratnamala, Ratnagarbha, Pushti, Vishvapramathini, Padmanana, Padmanibha, Nityatushta, Amritodbhava, Dhunvati, Dushprakampa.

(62) Suryamata, Drishadvati, Mahendrabhagini, Soumya, Varenya, Varadayika, Kalyani, Kamalavasa, Panchachuda, Varaprada.

(63) Vachya, Amareshvari, Vandhya, Durjjaya, Duratikrama, Kalaratri, Mahabega, Virabhadrapriya, Hita, Bhadrakali.

(64) Jaganmata, Bhaktamangaladayini, Karala, Pingalakara, Kamabheda, Mahasvana, Yashasvini, Yashoda, Shadadhvaparivartika, Shankhini.

(65) Padmini, Sankhya, Samkhyayogapravartika, Chaitra, Samvatsararuda, Jagatsampurani, Indraja, Shumbhari, Khechari, Khastha.

(66) Kamburgriva, Kalipriya, Khagadhvaja, Khagaruda, Varahi, Pugamalini, Aishvaryapadmanilaya, Virakta, Garudasana, Jayanti.

(67) Hridguhagamya, Shankareshtaganagrani, Samyastha, Sankalpasiddha, Sarvvavijnandayini, Kalikalkavihantrui, Guhyanpanishaduttama, Nishtha, Drishti.

(68) Smriti, Vyapi, Pushti, Tushti, Kriyavati, Vishvamareshvasreshana, Bhukti, Mukti, Shiva, Amrita.

(69) Lohitasarpamala, Bhisani, Naramalini, Anantashayana, Ananta, Naranarayanodbhava, Nrisimhi, Daityamathini, Shankachakragadadhara, Ambika.

(70) Sankarshanasamutpatti, Padasamshrava, Mahajvala, Mahabhuti, Sumurti, Sarvvakamadhuka, Suprabha, Sustani, Souri, Dharmakamarthamokshada.

(71) Bhrumadhyanilaya, Purva, Puranapurusharani, Mahavibhutida, Madhya, Sarojanayana, Sama, Anadya, Nilotpaladalaprabha, Asthadashabhuja.

(72) Sarvvashaktyasanaruda, Dharmadharmavivarjita, Vairagyajnananirata, Niraloka, Nirindriya, Vichitragahanadhara, Shvashvatasthanavasini, Sthaneshvari, Nirananda, Trishulavaradharini.

(73) Asheshadevatamurti, Devatavaradevata, Ganambika, Giriputri, Nishumbhavinipatini, Avarna, Varnarahita, Trivarna, Jivasambhava, Anantavarna.

(74) Ananyastha, Shankari, Shantamanasa, Agotra, Gomati, Goptri, Guhyarupa, Gunottara, Go, Gih.

(75) Govyapriya, Gouni, Ganeshvaranamaskrita, Satyabhama, Satyasandha, Trisandhya, Sandhivarjita, Sarvvavadashraya, Samkhya, Samkhyayogasamudbhava.

(76) Asamkhyeya, Aprameyakhya, Shunya, Suddakulodbhava, Vindunadasamutpatti, Shambhuvasa, Shashiprabha, Pishanga, Bhedarahita, Manojna.

(77) Madhusudani, Mahashri, Shrisamutapatti, Tamohparepratishthita, Tritattvamata, Trividha, Susukshmapadasamshraya, Shantyatita, Malatita, Nirvikara.

(78) Nirashraya, Shivakhya, Chittanilaya, Kashyapi, Shivajnanasvarupini, Daityadanavanirmukhi, Kalakarnika, Shastrayoni, Kriyamurti, Chatruvargapradarshika.

(79) Narayani, Narodbhuti, Koumudi, Lingadharini, Karmuki, Kalita, Bhava, Paravaravibhutida, Vadava, Pararddhajatamahima.

(80) Vamalochana, Subhadra, Devaki, Sita, Manasvini, Vedavedangaparaga, Manyumata, Mahamanyusamundbhava, Amanyu, Amritasvada.

(81) Puruhuta, Purushtuta, Ashouchya, Bhinnavishaya, Hiranyarajatapriya, Hiranyarajani, Haimi, Hemabharanabhushita, Vibhrajamana, Durjneya.

(82) Jyotishtomafalaprada, Mahnidrasamudbhyuti, Anidra, Satyadevata, Dirgha, Kakudmini, Hridya, Shantida, Shantivarddhini, Lakshyadishaktijanani.

(83) Shaktichakrapravartika, Trishaktijanani, Janya, Shadurmiparivarjita, Sudhama, Karmakarani, Yugantadahanatmika, Sankarshini, Jagaddhatri, Kamayoni.

(84) Kiritini, Aindri, Trailokyanamita, Vaishnavi, Parameshvari, Pradyumnadayita, Datri, Yugmadrishti, Trilochana, Madotkata.

(85) Hamsagati, Prachanda, Chandavikrama, Vrishavesha, Vishyanmatra, Vindhyaparvatavasini, Himavanmerunilaya, Kailasagirivasini, Chanurahantritanaya, Nitijna.

(86) Kamarupini, Vedavedya, Vratasnata, Brahmashailanivasini, Virabhadrapraja, Vira, Siddha, Mahakamasamudbhava, Vidyanadharanirakriti.

(87) Apyayani, Haranti, Pavani, Poshani, Kala, Matrika, Manmathodbhuta, Varija, Vahanapriya, Sudha.

(88) Karishini, Vani, Vinavadanatatpara, Sevita, Sevika, Sevya, Garudatmati, Arundhati, Hiranyakshi.

(89) Mrigakshi, Manadayini, Vasuprada, Vasumati, Vasudhara, Vasundhara, Dharadhara, Vararoha, Characharasahsrada, Shrifala.

(90) Shrimati, Shrisha, Shrinivasa, Shivapriya, Shridhari, Shrikari, Kalya, Shridhararddhasharirini, Anantadrishti, Akshudra.

(91) Dhatrisha, Dhanadapriya, Daityasamuhaniyantri, Simhika, Simhavahana, Suvarchala, Sushroni, Sukirti, Chhinnasamshaya, Rasajna.

(92) Rasada, Rama, Lelihana, Amritasrava, Nityodita, Svayamjyotih, Utsuka, Mritajivani, Vajratunda, Vajrajihva.

(93) Mangalya, Mangala, Mala, Nirmala, Malaharini, Gandharvi, Garudi, Chandri, Kambalashvatarapriya, Soudamini.

(94) Janananda, Bhrikutikutilanana, Karnikarakara, Kakshya, Kamsapranapaharini, Yugandhara, Yugavarta, Trisandhya, Harshavardhini, Pratyakshadevata.

(95) Divya, Divyagandhathivasana, Shakrasanagata, Shakri, Sadhya, Charusharasana, Ishta, Vishishta, Shishteshta, Shishtashishtaprapujita.

(96) Shatarupa, Shatavarta, Vinata, Surabhi, Sura, Surendramata, Sudyumna, Sushumna, Suryasamsthita, Samiksha.

(97) Satpratishtha, Nivritti, Jnanaparaga, Dharmashastrarthakushala, Dharmajna, Dharmavahana, Dharmadharmavinirmatri, Dharmikamangalaprada, Dharmamayi, Dharmashakti.

(98) Vidharma, Vishvadharmini, Dharmantara, Dharmamayi, Dharmapurva, Dhanavaha, Dharmopadeshtri, Dharmaksha, Dharmagamya, Dharadhara.

(100) Mahadevaikasakshini, Sadashiva, Vishaynmurti, Vedamurti, Amurtika, Parameshvari, Shobha, Vishala, Prasannavadana, Hrishtatma.

This completes the list of the one thousand names given to the goddess. Although Himalaya had used on thousand and eight names in the course of his prayers, ten of these names are missing in the list. You will also have noticed that a few of the names occur more than once.

12.11 The Line of Uttanapada

It is hoped that you have not forgotten that Svayambhuva Manu and his wife Shatarupa had a son named Uttanapada. Uttanapada's brother was Priyavarta. Dhruva was Uttanapada's son. Dhruva was so devoted to Vishnu that Vishnu earmarked for him a place in the heaven known as Dhruvaloka. (Dhruva became the Pole Star. The complete story of Dhruva and his tapasya in given in the Vishnu Purana).

Also in Uttanapada's line was born Chakshusha. He became a manu. (Chakshusha was the sixth Manu of the present kalpa). In Chakshusha Manu's line was born Vena, and Vena's son was Prithu. Prithu milked the earth and obtained foodgrains on which people can survive. That is the reason why the earth is known as prithivi. (Prithu's story is given in several Puranas, in addition to the Mahabharata and the Harivamsha).

Prithu's son was Shikhandi and Shikhandi's son was Sushila. Sushila was a very religious person. He faithfully studied the Vedas and visited several places of pilgrimage. His travels eventually brought him to the Himalayas, through which the sacred river Mandakini flowed. Near the banks of the river was a beautiful hermitage. It was there that Sushila began to pray to Shiva. While Sushila was thus praying, a sage named Shvetashvatara arrived. The sage's body was lean with tapasya and he was smeared with ashes.

Sushila finished praying to Shiva and worshipped the sage. ”I am indeed fortunate that I have met you,” he told Shvetashvatara. “Please make me your disciple and teach me all that there is to know.”

The sage agreed. He taught Sushila and several other disciples the knowledge of the shastras (sacred texts).

Shikhandi had a brother named Havirddhana. Havirddhana's son was Prachinavarhi. He married Savarna, the daughter of the ocean, and had ten sons. These sons were known as the Prachetas. The Prachetas were devoted to Vishnu and prayed to Vishnu for several years. (The Vishnu Purana states that they meditated for ten thousand years under the ocean.) All ten Prachetas married Marisha and Daksha was born as a result of this marriage. (Marisha's story is given in the Vishnu Purana.) It was this Daksha who had earlier been

born as Brahma's son. Because he quarrelled with Shiva, Shiva cursed Daksha that he would be born as the son of the Prachetas.

"Tell us the story of Daksha," the sages requested Lomaharshana.

(The Prachetas are not to be confused with a sage named Pracheta. The sage Pracheta was Brahma's son, as per the Brahmavaivarta Purana.)

12.12 Daksha's Story

Daksha was Brahma's son and had a daughter named Sati. Sati was married to Shiva. Daksha was thus Shiva's father-in-law.

Once Daksha came to visit his son-in-law. But although Shiva worshipped him with all due respect. Daksha felt that he had been slighted. Subsequently, when Sati went to visit her father, Daksha severely reprimanded her.

"Your husband is worse than useless," he told his daughter. "My other sons-in-law are far superior to him. You are not welcome in my house. Return to your worthless husband."

Sati could not bear to hear this abuse of her husband and immolated herself. She was later born as Parvati, the daughter of Himavana (the Himalayas) and married Shiva again.

Shiva was furious to learn that Sati had died. He visited Daksha and cursed him that he would be born on earth as the son of a kshatriya. It was thus that Daksha had been born as the son of the Prachetas.

(Dakhsa's story is full of inconsistencies in the Puranas. There is an account of a yajna that Daksha performed. Shiva either destroyed this yajna himself, or had it destroyed by Virabhadra. But which Daksha performed this yajna, the one who was the son of Brahma or the one who was the son of Prachetas? The Kurma Purana suggests that it was the son of the Prachetas who performed this ceremony. The more customary account, such as that in the Bhagavata Purana, is that it was Brahma's son who performed the sacrifice. Daksha was angered at Shiva because, on one particular occasion, Shiva did not stand up to show him respect, although Daksha happened to be Shiva's father-in-law. Daksha therefore organised a yajna to which he did not invite Shiva. Sati went to the ceremony uninvited, and immolated herself when her father started criticise her husband. Hearing of Sati's death, Shiva destroyed the yajna. He also cursed Daksha that Daksha would have to be born as the son of the Prachetas.)

To return to the account of the Kurma Purana, the Daksha, who was the son of the Prachetas, organised a yajna. All the gods and sages were invited to this ceremony. But as a result of Daksha's earlier enmity with his son-in-law, Shiva was not invited.

There was a sage named Dadhichi who protested at this slight to Shiva. "How can you have a religious ceremony without inviting Shiva?" he told Daksha.

"Shiva is a worthless fellow," replied Daksha. "He is not fit to be worshipped together with the other gods. he wears skulls and destroys all that is created. How can he be treated as an equal of the great Vishnu, the preserver of all that one can see? My yajna is dedicated to Vishnu. It is not meant for the likes of Shiva."

Dadhichi tried to persuade Daksha that Shiva should not be ignored, but Daksha was in no mood to listen. Dadhichi refused to take part in such a yajna and assured Daksha that his ceremony would not be successfully completed. He also cursed the other sages, who had sided with Daksha, that they would go to hell and would deviate from the path laid down in the Vedas. (The Mahabharata also records Dadhichi's protest. According to the Mahabharata, Dadhichi was devoted to Shiva.)

Daksha went ahead with his yajna. The other gods, including Vishnu, came to attend the ceremony.

Meanwhile, Parvati got to know about the yajna and told Shiva, "How can there be a ceremony at which you are not invited? Although Daksha used to be my father in my earlier life, this evil act of his should not be condoned. Please destroy the ceremony."

(If one goes by the more customary account, the question of Parvati's asking Shiva to destroy the yajna does not arise. Sati died on the occasion of the ceremony and it was the grief of Sati's death that led Shiva to exact vengeance. This happened much before Parvati was born as the daughter of Himavana.)

Because of Parvati's bidding, Shiva created a demon named Virabhadra. Virabhadra had a thousand heads, a thousand feet, a thousand eyes and a thousand arms. His body shone with radiance like the sun at the time of destruction. The thousand arms held all sorts of weapons in them.

"What are my orders?" Virabhadra asked Shiva.

"Go and destroy Daksha's yajna," was the reply.

Virabhadra ascended a bull and set out for Daksha's house. He created thousands and thousands of demons who would aid him in the task of destruction. These demons were armed with spears, tridents, maces, clubs and stones. Parvati also created a goddess named Bhadrakali who would help Virabhadra.

This strange army arrived at the place where the yajna was being held and said, “We are Shiva’s followers. We have come to receive Shiva’s share of the offerings.”

“No offerings have been earmarked for Shiva,” replied the gods and the sages. “He has not even been invited to the sacrifice.

These words angered Virabhadra and he began his task of destruction. His companions uprooted the scaffoldings that had been erected on the occasion of the sacrifice. The sacrificial horse was flung into the waters of the river Ganga. (This was an ashvamedha yajna (horse sacrifice) that was being performed on the banks of the river Ganga.

Virabhadra caught hold of Bhaga (identified as the sun-god Surya) and tore out his eyes. He smashed the teeth of the god Pusha (also identified as another manifestation of the sun-god Surya). As for the moon-god Chandra, Virabhadra gave him a resounding kick and sent him reeling. The fire-god Agni had his arms and tongue sliced off by Virabhadra’s companions. The sages were kicked and boxed.

Vishnu himself came to intervene and Virabhadra began to fight with Vishnu.

Vishnu has a wonderful weapon named sudarshana chakra (a bladed-discuss) and he hurled this at Virabhadra. But Virabhadra easily repelled this weapon with his arrows. Vishnu is carried by Garuda, king of the birds. Garuda attacked Virabhadra, but so fierce was Virabhadra, that Garuda had to flee. The entire universe marvelled to see that Virabhadra could thus vanquish Vishnu and Garuda.

Brahma now arrived and sought to put an end to the fighting. He started to pray to Shiva and Shiva and Parvati arrived on the scene. The assembled gods and sages also began to pray to Shiva and Parvati. Parvati was moved to pity by these prayers.

“These gods and sages have now sought refuge with you,” she told Shiva. “Please pardon them their sins.”

“Agreed,” replied Shiva. “You have my blessing snow. But please remember that one cannot have a religious ceremony without I being worshipped.”

The gods and the sages realised that Shiva was no different from Vishnu. They were really one and the same, different manifestations of the same universal force.

When Daksha had earlier been born as the son of Brahma, he had married Asikli, the daughter of Virana. (There is a minor contradiction here as well. Earlier, the Kurma Purana has stated that Daksha’s wife was Prasuti. It is of

course possible that Prasuti and Asikli were different names for the same individual.)

Daksha and Asikli had one thousand sons. But the sage Narada had persuaded these sons to become hermits, disinterested in worldly pursuits. (The Vishnu Purana given a more complete account. First, five thousand sons named the Haryashvas had been born and Narada had persuaded these sons to become hermits. Next, one thousand sons named the Shavalashvas had been born and these had also become hermits at Narada's instigation. Thereafter, sixty daughters had been born.)

To return to the account of Kurma Purana, Daksha and Asikli had had sixty daughters had been married to Dharma, Brahma's son. (There is again a contradiction. In the section on creation, the Kurma Purana had stated that thirteen daughters had been married to Dharma.) The ten daughters who had been married to Dharma were Marutvati, Vasu, Yami, Lamba, Bhanu, Arundhati, Sankalpa, Muhurta, Sadhya and Vishva. Vishva's sons were the gods known as the vishvadevas, Sadhya's sons the gods known as the sadhyas, Marutvati's sons the gods known as the bhanus. (More usually, the Puranas have a completely different account of the birth of the maruts. They were born as the sons of Diti, Kashyapa's wife.) Muhurta gave birth to time, Lamba to cattle (ghosha), Yami to snakes (nagas), Arundhati to all the objects (vishaya) on earth and Sankalpa to resolution (sankalpa).

Thirteen of Daksha's daughters had been married to the sage Kashyapa. Their names were Aditi, Diti, Arishta, Danu, Surasa, Khasa, Surabhi, Vinata, Tamra, Krodhavasha, Ira, Kadru and Muni. The twelve gods, known as the adityas, were born as the sons of Aditi. Their names were Amsha, Dhata, Bhaga, Tvashta, Mitra, Varuna, Aryama, Vivasvana, Savita, Pusha, Amshumana and Vishnu.

Danu's sons were demons (danavas). Chief among them were Tara, Shambara, Kapila, Shankara, Svarbhanu and Vrishaparva. (Some Puranas mention forty such sons.)

Surasa gave birth to the gandharvas. (More usually, it is stated that Surasa was the mother of the snakes (nagas).)

Aristha's sons were thousands and thousands of snakes (sarpas).

Kadru's sons were also snakes (nagas).

Tamra's daughters were the ancestors of the birds. Surabhi gave birth to cows and buffaloes and Ira to trees and herbs.

Khasa was the mother of yakshas (demi-gods), Muni of apsaras and Krodhavasha of rakshasas.

Vinata had two sons named Garuda and Aruna. These two sons performed very difficult tapasya. Garuda pleased Vishnu and obtained the boon that he would carry Vishnu around. Aruna pleased Shiva and obtained the boon that he would become the sun's charioteer. (The story of the rivalry between Vinata and Kadru and their respective offspring is given in the Bhagavata and Matsya Puranas.)

This leaves Diti. She had two sons named Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. There two sons were demons and their children came to be known as the daityas. Hiranyakashipu was elder to Hiranyaksha. (The Puranas do not agree on this. In some Puranas, Hiranyaksha is referred to as the elder brother.)

12.13 Hiranyakshipu

Hiranyakashipu pleased Brahma through his prayers. As a result of the boon that he received from Brahma, he became invisible and started to oppress the world. He drove the gods out of heaven.

The gods and the sages went to Brahma to persuade him to do something about Hiranyakashipu.

"I cannot really help you," said Brahma. "Go to the northern shores of the great ocean and pray to Vishnu there. I will accompany you. It is Vishnu alone who can find a solution."

Brahma led the gods and the sages to the shores of the great ocean and started to pray to Vishnu there.

Vishnu appeared before them. "Why have all of you come here?" he asked. "What do you want?"

"It is Hiranyakashipu," replied the gods and the sages. "He is oppressing the world thanks to a boon received from Brahma. Because of the boon, he can only be killed by you. Please kill him and save the universe."

Vishnu created a being out of his body. This being was as gigantic as Mount Sumeru and held a lotus (padma), a conch-shell (shankha) and a mace (gada) in his hands. "Go and kill Hiranyakashipu," Vishnu instructed the being.

The being thereupon ascended Garuda and left for Hiranyakashipu's capital. His roars made the ramparts of the city quake.

Hiranyakashipu had four sons named Prahlada, Anuhrada, Samhrada and Hrada. (The more usual names are Prahlada, Anuhlada, Samhlada and Hlada.) Accompanied by Hirayakashipu's demon soldiers, these four sons came out to fight with the being easily repelled all of these. The four princes then unleashed divine weapons on the being. Prahlada used brahmastra, Anuhrada vaishnavastra, Samhrada koumarastra and Hrada agneyastra. But these divine

weapons could do the wonderful being no harm. He merely picked up the princes and flung them far away.

On seeing that his sons had thus been disposed of, Hiranyakashipu came to fight. He gave the being a resounding kick on his chest and the creature fled in pain to Vishnu.

Vishnu now realised that he would have to take care of Hiranyakashipu himself. He adopted the form of a being who was a half-man and half-lion. Since nara means man and simha means lion, this came to be known as the narasimha incarnation (avatara) of Vishnu.

“Go and kill this peculiar creature,” Hiranyakashipu instructed Prahrada.

Prahrada and his brothers tried to fight with Vishnu, but were defeated easily. Hiranyakashipu now sent his brother Hiranyakasha to fight. Hiranyakasha used several weapons on Vishnu, including the diving weapon known as pashupata. But these weapons could do Vishnu no harm.

Meanwhile, Prahrada had realised that this being could be none other than Vishnu. He started to pray to Vishnu. He requested his brothers, uncle and father not to fight with Vishnu. But Hiranyakashipu’s chest with his claws and thereby killed him. He also killed Anuhrada, Samhrada and Hrada.

(A fairly common story in the Puranas, such as the Vishnu Purana, is the story of Prahlada. Despite being Hiranyakashipu’s son, Prahlada was devoted to Vishnu from his childhood. Hiranyakashipu had no desire to have a son who was devoted to Vishnu and did his level best to kill Prahlada. But Prahlada was protected by Vishnu and survived all these attempts. In the final incident, narasimha appeared while Hiranyakashipu was arguing with Prahlada and killed the demon-king. Vishnu then crowned Prahlada king in Hiranyakashipu’s place. There was no question of Hiranyaksha becoming king after Hiranyakashipu. In the more common account, Hiranyaksha was the elder brother and had already been killed by Vishnu in his boar (varaha) incarnation. It was Hiranyakasha’s death that led to Hiranyakashipu’s hatred of Vishnu. There is thus some variance between this more common account and that related by the Kurma Purana.)

12.14 Hiranyaksha

After Hiranyakashipu died, Hiranyaksha became the king of the demons.

Hiranyaksha promptly began to oppress the world. He defeated the gods and drove them out of heaven. He also took the earth down to the underworld. The gods again went to Brahma in search of a solution and Brahma took them to Vishnu. They prayed to Vishnu so that Hiranyaksha might be killed.

Vishnu adopted the form of a boar and killed Hiranyaksha. He also raised the earth up to its rightful place. (This was the story that was alluded to when the Kurma Purana mentioned Vishnu's boar incarnation.)

When Hiranyaksha was killed, Prahlada became the king of demons. Initially, he ruled well. He worshipped Vishnu and performed yajnas. The kingdom thrived and prospered. But on one occasion, Prahrada forgot to worship a brahmana through inadvertence.

The brahmana was furious as he thought that Prahrada had done this knowingly. "You have dared to ignore me because you thank that you are blessed by Vishnu," said the brahmana. "I curse you that you will forget all about Vishnu. Your delusions will make you fight with Vishnu and you will lose all your powers."

As a result of the brahmana's curse, Prahrada deviated from the righteous path. He ignored the brahmanas and the Vedas. He desired to have revenge on Vishnu for having killed his father and uncle. Prahlada fought a long and bitter war with Vishnu. When he was eventually defeated by Vishnu, he realised the folly of his evil ways and sought refuge with Vishnu.

After Prahrada's death, Hiranyaksha's son Andhaka became the king of the demons.

12.15 A Digression on Goutama

Many years ago, there was a terrible drought on earth. There was no food to be had and famine prevailed.

There were several sages who lived in the forest, and they too, suffered from a lack of food.

Goutama was a very powerful sage and he had a hermitage in the forest. Such were the powers that Goutama had that it never stopped raining in his hermitage. There was no famine there and plenty of food was to be had. The other sages therefore went to Goutama's hermitage and begged him to provide them with food and shelter. This request Goutama readily agreed to, and the sages lived there happily.

After twelve years had passed, it began to rain again. The drought had passed and foodgrains started to grow. The sages no begged their leave of Goutama.

"Stay for a few more days," said Goutama. "Be my guests and bless my household."

The sages tarried, but they were jealous of Goutama and his powers. They therefore plotted to bring about Goutama's downfall. With their own powers, they created a black calf. This calf was nothing but an illusion. But having

created it, the sages sent it to Goutama. Goutama found the calf wandering around and decided to take it to his cowshed. But as soon as he touched the calf, the calf seemed to die. All this was because of the illusion, but Goutama did not know this. He was thunderstruck at having killed a cow.

"You are evil, you have killed a cow," the sages told Goutama. "It would be a sin to remain as your guest. We are leaving."

By then, Goutama had got to know that the calf had been an illusion. He was extremely angry with the sages and cursed them, "because you have been evil, you have deviate from the path laid down by the Vedas. You will rot in hell and will have to be born several times to be freed of your sins."

The sages started to pray to Vishnu and Shiva. They wished that their sins might be cleansed.

"What shall we do with these sages?" Shiva asked Vishnu. "Shall we pardon them? They are praying for deliverance."

"Never," replied Vishnu. "Those who do not follow what is laid down in the Vedas will surely rot in hell. But since they are not permitted to follow the sacred shastras, let us compose some other shastras for them. They will follow those evil shastras, rot in hell and be born on earth several times. That is their penance."

To delude the sages, Shiva himself pretended to be a great religious teacher. He preached evil ways and the stupid brahmanas began to follow what he preached.

12.16 Andhaka

While Shiva was gone, he left his companion Nandi to look after his household. He also gave Vishnu the overall responsibility of ensuring that all was well with Parvati and the gods and the sages.

Realising that Shiva was away, Andhaka thought that this was the opportune moment for abducting Parvati. He found that Nandi stood guard at the entrance to Shiva's house and began to fight with Nandi. Nandi struck Andhaka on the chest with a trident.

This angered Andhaka and he created a thousand other demons who were just like him in appearance. This army of demons defeated Nandi and the gods. Nandi did not know what to do and started to pray to Vishnu. Vishnu created some goddesses from his body and these goddesses killed the demon soldiers. Andhaka also fled.

After twelve years had passed, Shiva returned and learnt what had transpired.

By then, Andhaka had recovered and he returned, determined in his bid to abduct Parvati. Both Shiva and Vishnu started to fight with Andhaka's army.

Vishnu told Shiva, "Kill this demon. No one but you can kill Andhaka. Please kill the demon and deliver the universe."

Shiva pierced Andhaka's chest with a trident. He held the trident aloft, with Andhaka transfixed to one of its prongs. And with his trident held aloft, Shiva began to dance.

But all the evil had deserted Andhaka's body and mind as soon as he had been pierced by Shiva's trident. He started to pray to Shiva. These prayers pleased Shiva.

He lowered the trident and told Andhaka, "I am pleased with your prayers. My companions are known as the ganas. Stay by my side and be a ganapati, that is, a lord over the ganas. You will be Nandi's companion."

12.17 Vali

With Andhaka thus taken care of, Prahrada's son Virochana became the king of the demons. He ruled his kingdom well.

There was a sage named Sanatakumara who once went to visit Virochana. Virochana was delighted to see the sage and Sanatakumara instructed Virochana on the true nature of the universe. These teachings so impressed Virochana that he no longer had any desire to be a king. He went off to meditate, after having crowned his son, Vali, as the king of the demons.

Vali was a good and righteous king. He ruled well and observed religious rites faithfully. But he defeated Indra and the other gods and won over heaven from them. Indra and the other gods started to pray to Vishnu for deliverance.

The mother of all the gods was Aditi and she was despondent at seeing her children suffer thus. She too, started to pray to Vishnu. Stirred by these prayers, Vishnu appeared before Aditi.

"What boon do you desire?" he asked.

"Please grant me the boon that you will be born as my son." replied Aditi. "And as my son, you will take care of Vali."

Vishnu granted the boon and was born as Aditi's son. As Aditi's son, Vishnu studied the Vedas under the sage Bharadvaja.

Meanwhile, Vali arranged a yajna and Vishnu came to attend the ceremony in the form of a dwarf (vamana). (In more usual accounts, such as the Bhagavata Purana, Vishnu was born as a dwarf.)

Vali was not going to refuse anything to anyone on the occasion of the sacrifice. As soon as he saw the dwarf, he worshipped him and said, “I am fortunate that you have come to attend my ceremony. Please tell me what I can do for you.”

“Grant me as much of land as can be covered in three of my footsteps,” replied the dwarf.

This boon Vali granted. The dwarf immediately assumed a gigantic form. With one footstep, Vishnu covered the entire earth. With a second, he covered the sky. And with the third and final footstep, he covered heaven. The entire universe is inside and egg (anda) and outside the egg there is water. Vishnu’s foot cracked the shell of the egg and some of the water that was outside, poured in. This water began to flow through the sky and became the heavenly Ganga. (The story of the heavenly Ganga (identified as the Milky Way) descending to earth is a separate story. The story of Ganga being born from Vishnu’s body is given in the Brahmavaivarta Purana.)

Having traversed all the land that was available, Vishnu resumed his form of a dwarf.

“You have now donated to me all the three worlds,” he told Vali. “Where will you stay?”

“I seek refuge with you,” was Vali’s answer.

Vishnu then instructed Vali to go and live in the underworld. As for heaven, it was restored to Indra.

This is the story of Vishnu’s dwarf (vamana) incarnation.

12.18 Vana

Vali had a hundred sons, the eldest among whom was Vana. Vana was devoted to Shiva. He was also extremely powerful. He defeated Indra and conquered the three worlds.

Indra and the other gods went to Shiva. “Your devotee, Vana is oppressing us,” they told Shiva. “Please take care of him.”

Shiva took up a single arrow and with this, he completely burnt up Vana’s city.

(This is deviation from the usual account of the Puranas, such as the Vishnu Purana or the Bhagavata Purana. In those accounts, Krishna fought with Vana and defeated him, although Shiva fought on Vana’s side. It was because of Krishna’s blessings that Vana became Shiva’s companion. Vana’s capital was named Shonitapura.)

When Vana's city was being burnt up, Vana emerged and started to pray to Shiva's linga (image of Shiva). Pleased at Vana's prayers, Shiva made Vana a ganapati. Thus, Vana came to be Shiva's constant companion.

12.19 The Solar Dynasty

The sun-god, Vivasvana, was the son of Kashyapa and Aditi. He had four wives, Samjna, Rajni, Prabha and Chhaya.

Samjna's son was Vaivasvata Manu. Rajni's children were Yama, yamuna and Revanta. Savarni, Shani, Tapati and Vishti were Chhaya's children and Prabha's son was Prabhata.

(The names do not tally across the Puranas. For example, in the Markandeya Purana, the sun had only two wives, Samjna and Chhaya. Yama and Yamuna were also the children of Samjna.)

Vaivasvata Manu had nine sons. Their names were Ikshvaku, Nabhaga, Arishta, Karusha and Prishadhra. Manu also had a daughter named Ila, from whom the lunar dynasty originated.

Ikshvaku's son was Vikukshi and this was the line of Kakutstha. In this line was born Rama, of Ramayana fame.

The names of several kings of the solar dynasty are given. But these we will not reproduce, as they are merely a catalog of names.

12.20 The Lunar Dynasty

Budha was the son of the moon-god Chandra. Budha married Ila and they had a son named Pururava.

Pururava married the apsara Urvashi and they had six sons. One of these sons was Ayu and amongst Ayu's descendants was a king named Yayati.

Yayati had two wives. The first was Devayani, daughter of Shukracharya, the preceptor of the demons. The second wife was named Sharmishtha and she was the daughter of Vrishaparva, the king of the danavas. Yayati and Devayani had two sons, Yadu and Tursavu. Yayati and Sharmishtha had three sons, Druhya, Anu and Puru. When it became time for Yayati to retire to the forest, he gave puru the bulk of the kingdom and Puru's descendants came to be known as the Pauravas. Yadu was given some land towards the south-west and his descendants were the Yadavas. Turvasu ruled to the south-east, Druhya to the west and Anu to the north.

One of Yadu's descendants was the king Kritavirya and Kritavirya's son became famous as Kartavirya Arjuna. he had a thousand arms and was the most skilled of fighters. He eventually met his death at the hands of Parashurama.

Kartavirya Arjuna had several hundred sons. But the five most important ones were Shura, Shurasena, Krishna, Dhrishna and Jayadvaja. Jayadvaja was devoted to Vishnu, but his brothers were more inclined towards the worship of Shiva.

The four brothers told Jayadhvaja. "Stop worshipping Vishnu. Our father was a devotee of Shiva's and it is our duty to follow the example set by our father. Let us worship Shiva."

"It is my duty to worship Vishnu," replied Jayadhvaja. "Vishnu is the lord of everything, he is the preserver. How can I do otherwise?"

The brothers debated about the virtues of worshipping Shiva vis-a-vis Vishnu, but could arrive at no consensus. They therefore decided to seek the advice of the seven great sages (saptarshi), chief amongst whom was Vashistha.

Vashishtha told the brothers, "One worships the god that one chooses, there are no rules in this regard. All gods yield the desired fruit, if properly worshipped. To the extent that there are rules, there are as follows. Kings worship Vishnu and Indra; brahmanas worship Agni, Aditya, Brahma and Shiva; the gods worship Vishnu; the demons worship Shiva; the yakshas and gandharvas worship Chandra; the sages worship Brahma and Shiva; and women worship Parvati. But for humans, the best way is to realise that Shiva is no different from Vishnu and that Shiva and Vishnu should therefore be worshipped simultaneously."

The Kurma Purana also gives the names of several kings belongings to the lunar dynasty. But these we will gloss over, as they are merely only a catalogue of names.

12.21 Durjaya and Urvashi

There used to be a king named Durjaya. He was learned in the shastras and a good king. His wife was a beautiful and good woman.

One day, King Durjaya went to the banks of the river Kalindi. There he met the apsara Urvashi and fell in love with her. He married Urvashi and lived with her for many years.

After several years had passed, Durjaya remembered his kingdom and wife. He told Urvashi, "Please let me return to my home now."

"Not yet, king," replied Urvashi. "Please stay with me for one more year."

"I will return as soon as I have visited my kingdom," said Durjaya. "I promise you that I will not tarry there. Therefore, let me return."

"I will let you go on condition that you do not live as the husband of any other woman," replied Urvashi.

Durjaya agreed to this condition and returned home. But because of the word that he had given Urvashi, he stayed away from his wife and did not venture near her. His wife tried to find out what the matter was, but Durjaya would not reply. Finally, the queen got to know what Durjaya had done and realised that her husband had committed a sin. He should not have married Urvashi while his wife was still alive. The queen therefore told Durjaya, “You have sinned. You must perform penance. That is the sort of action that befits a king, not this despondency that you have become addicted to.”

King Durjaya went and met the sage Kanva to ascertain what sort of penance should be performed for the sin that he had committed. Kanva advised him to go to the Himalayas and meditate.

While Durjaya was going to the Himalayas, he met a gandharva king. The gandharva king wore a divine garland, Durjaya remembered Urvashi. He thought that the garland was a fitting adornment for no one but Urvashi. He began to fight with the gandharva over the possession of the garland. Durjaya managed to defeat the gandharva king and obtain the garland. He immediately hastened to banks of the river Kalindi, because he thought that he might find Urvashi there. But Urvashi was not to be found, and Durjaya roamed the world in search of her.

Finally, Durjaya arrived in the region of Mount Sumeru. The lake Manasa is located there. And by the shores of the lake, Durjaya found Urvashi. He gave the apsara the garland and lived happily with her for some time.

After a few days had passed, Urvashi asked Durjaya, “King please tell me what transpired when you went home.”

Durjaya thereupon told Urvashi about the conversation that he had with his wife and about what the sage Kanva had asked him to do.

Urvashi was alarmed when she heard the king’s account. “What have you done?” she exclaimed. “Hasten back, otherwise Kanva and your wife will curse the two of us.”

But Durjaya was so smitten with love for Urvashi that he refused to listen to Urvashi’s entreaties. Urvashi therefore made herself very ugly. This repelled Durjaya, and he gave Urvashi up.

For twelve years Durjaya performed difficult tapasya, living only on fruits and roots. For another twelve years, he lived only on air. After having thus meditated for twenty-four years, Durjaya went to Kanva’s hermitage and told the sage all that he had done.

"I am pleased that you have realised the folly of your ways and have performed tapasya," said Kanva. "But that alone is not enough. Your sin has been too severe. Go to the city of Varanasi and live there. Shiva is ever-present in that city and he will pardon all your sins."

Durjaya did this and was pardoned all his sins. Such are the benefits of praying to Shiva and such are the virtues of the wonderful city of Varanasi.

12.22 Krshna's Tapasya

Krishna was the eight incarnation of Vishnu and he was born as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva.

Initially, Krishna did not have any sons Desirous of obtaining a son, Krishna went to visit the sage Upamanyu. The sage's hermitage was beautiful. Wonderous were the trees and flowers and grew there. The constant chanting of the Vedas could be heard. Wild animals lost their ferocity as soon as they entered the hermitage. Lotus flowers bloomed in the ponds. Sages came from all over the country to meditate in the hermitage. The sacred river Ganga flowed past the hermitage.

Krishna greeted the sages and they worshipped him in return.

Upamanyu welcomed Krishna with various offerings and said, "Our meditation has been amply rewarded by your visit. The great Vishnu has himself come to grace us by your presence. But is there any particular reason as to why you have come to the hermitage?"

"I wish to meet Shiva," replied Krishna. "How does one get to met him?"

"Shiva appears if a devotee performs difficult tapasya," said Upamanyu. "It helps if the meditation is accompanied by great faith."

Hearing these words, Krishna began a difficult religious rite known as pashupata vrata. He donned clothes made out of the barks of trees, smeared ashes on his body and continuously chanted Shiva's name. After many years had passed, Shiva and Parvati appeared before Krishna.

"Krishna, why are you performing tapasya?" asked Shiva. "You are the great Vishnu himself. Any object that you desire is immediately attained. Why are you then engaged in this task of meditation?"

"I wish to have a son who is just like you," said Krishna. "Please let him also be devoted to you."

Shiva gladly granted the boon and the son who was born was Shamba (alternatively, Samba). He was the son of Krishna and Jambavati.

(Stories about Shamba are to be found in the Vishnu Purana, and also in Mahabharata.)

12.23 The Yugas (Eras)

You probably remember that there are four yugas or eras - satya yuga or krita yuga, treta yuga, dvapara yuga and kali yuga.

Lomaharshana next told the sages about the characteristics of these four eras.

Kali yuga is the worst of the four eras. People are sinful and forget the dharma of the four varnas and the four ashramas. In fact, men are so sinful that no prescribed penance atones for their sins. The only place which is free from such sins is the sacred city of Varanasi.

In satya yuga, the best course to be pursued is meditation; in treta yuga it is the pursuit of knowledge (jnana); in dvapara yuga it is the performance of yajnas; and in kali yuga it is the donation of alms. Brahma is the primary god in satya yuga, Surya in treta yuga, Vishnu in dvapara yuga and Shiva in kali yuga.

Envy and jealousy were unknown in satya yuga and everyone was happy. There was no superiors and inferiors and all individuals were equally healthy and equally handsome. There were no fixed places for people to live in, no cities and no villages. men lived in the mountains and on the shores of the oceans.

In satya yuga, water was always freely available. This was no longer the case in treta yuga. Water only became available when it rained. Rain was unknown earlier. And as it rained, trees began to grow. People lived on these trees. The fruit from these trees provided the sustenance required to make a living. But gradually, anger and jealousy came to be known and many of the wonderful trees disappeared as mankind picked up evils ways. However, enough trees were left to ensure that people did not die of starvation. They lived on honey gathered from the trees. Although men looked on satya yuga with nostalgia, ill-health and disease continued to be unknown even in treta yuga. But towards the end of treta yuga, people became really sinful. All the trees disappeared. To make a living, mankind had to resort to agriculture and animal husbandry. The weather became inclement and seasons like summer, monsoon and winter led to hardship. Notions of property were also introduced. Individuals appropriated mountains, rivers, land, trees and herbs as their own. To instil righteousness in the minds of people, the principles of varnashrama dharma were set out towards the end of treta yuga.

In dvapara yuga, hatred, anger and jealousy became much more common. Fighting started. It was then that Vedavyasa spread amongst ordinary people, the knowledge that was in the Vedas, by dividing them. Drought, death and disease came to be known in dvapara yuga.

In kali yuga, fraudulence is the norm. There are severe droughts and famines, revolutions take place. People are liars and sinners. They are easily angered. They d not respect the brahmanas. The brahmanas, on their part, forget all about the Vedas and yajnas. Shudras become kings and oppress the brahmanas. Some Shudras shave off their heads and wear saffron clothes. They pretend to be religious teachers. And horror of horrors, people start to believe in these fraudulent teachers. Women wear hairpins in their hair. As if this alone were not enough, they refuse to obey their husbands. Thieves are everywhere. The only redeeming feature of kali yuga is the fact that even if one worships Shiva just a little bit in kali yuga, one attains undying punya (store of merit).

12.24 Lingas

A linga is an image of Shiva. There are several wonderful lingas in the wonderful city of Varanasi.

There is a gigantic linga named Omkara. Amongst other famous lingas located in the city are Krittivaseshvara, Madhyadeshvara, Vishveshvara and Kaparddishvara.

The Kurma Purana recites the glories of these lingas. It also enumerates the various tirthas (places of pilgrimage) that are to be found in the city of Varanasi.

It goes on to list the virtues of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the city of Prayaga (modern Allahabad).

12.25 Geography and Astronomy

It is hoped that you have not forgotten that Svayambhuva Manu had a son named Priyavrata. Priyavrata had ten sons. Their names were Agnidhra, Agnivahu, Vapushmana, Dyutimana, Medha, Medhatithi, Bhavya, Savana, Putra and Jyotishmana.

Medha, Agnivahu and Putra had no desire to rule. They were not interested in material pursuits and became hermits.

Priyavrata divided the earth amongst the remaining seven sons. Thus it was that the earth came to be divided into seven regions or dvipas. The names of these regions are Jambudvipa, Plakshadvipa, Shalmalidvipa, Kushadvipa, Krounchjdvipa, Shakadvipa and Pushkaradvipa. Agnidhra ruled over Jambudvipa, Medhatithi over Plakshadvipa, Vapushmana over Shalmalidvipa, Jyotishmana over Kushadvipa, Dyutimana over Krounchadvipa, Bhavya over Shakadvipa and Savan over Pushkaradvipa.

Agnidhra, the ruler of Jambudvipa, had nine sons. Their names were Nabhi Kimpurusha, Hari, Ilavrita, Ramya, Hiranyavana, Kuru, Bhadrashva and Ketumala. Agnidhra divided Jambudvipa into nine regions (varshas) and gave each of his sons a region to rule over. A king named Bharata was one of Nabhi's

descendants. After the name of Bharata, the region that Nabhi ruled over has come to be known as Bharatavarsha.

There are fourteen regions (lokas) in the universe. Seven of them form the upper regions. Their names are bhuloka, bhuvarloka, svarloka, maharloka, janaloka, tapolaka and satyaloka. Bhuloka is the earth and its limits extend upto the points that can be lit up the rays of the sun and the moon. Take the distance from bhuloka to the solar circle. An equal distance beyond the solar circle constitutes bhuvarloka. The region from the limits of bhuvarloka to the region of Dhruva (the Pole Star) is svarloka or svarga (heaven). Above the solar circle is the lunar circle and above that come, successively, the regions of the stars (nakshatras), Budha (Mercury), Shukra (Venus), Mangala (Mars), Brihaspati (Jupiter), the saptarshis' (the constellation Ursa Majoris or the Great Bear) and Dhruva.

Shani (Saturn), Brihaspati and Mangala move slowly. The sun, the moon, Budha and Shukra move relatively fast. The sun's chariot is drawn by seven horses named Gayatri, Vrihati, Ushnika, Jagati, Pamki, Anushtupa and Trishtupa. In each month, the sun adopts a specific form known as an aditya. There are thus twelve adityas - Dhatta, Aryama, Mitra, Varuna, Shakru, Vivasvana, Pusha, Parjanya, Amshu, Bhaga, Tvashta and Vishnu.

Maharloka is above the world of Dhruva (dhruvaloka). It is reserved for those who have been freed from the bonds of the world. Janaloka is still further away. Brahma's sons live there. Tapaloka is beyond janaloka and satyaloka is beyond tapaloka. Another word for satyaloka is brahmaloka, since Brahma lives there. Vishnu lives there as well.

(The Kurma Purana does not mention the seven lokas that constitute the lower regions of the universe. This is the underworld (patala).)

There are seven seas that surround the seven dvipas on earth. The names of the seas are Kshara, Ikshu, Sura, Ghrita, Dadhi, Kshira and Svadu. (The names of the seven oceans often differ from Purana to Purana.)

Right in the centre of Jambudvipa is Mount Sumeru. To its south lie the mountains Himavana, Hemakuta and Nishadha; and to its north the mountains Nila, Shveta and Shringi. Bharatavarsha is to the south of Mount Sumeru. Brahma's assembly is located on the peak of Mount Sumeru.

12.26 Manvataras

You already know what a manvantara is. The titles of the seven great sages (saptarshi), the names of the gods and the title of Indra change from the manvantara to another.

In the present kalpa (cycle), six manvantaras have passed.

The first Manu was Svayambhuva.

The second Manu was Svarochisha. The gods then were the paravatas and tushitas and the title of Indra was held by Vipashchita. The seven great sages were Urjja, Stamba, prana, Dambholi, Vrishabha, Timira and Arvarivana.

Uttama was the third Manu. The gods of this manvantara were the sudhamas, stayas, shivas, pratardanas and vashavartis and the name of the Indra was Sushanti. Rajah, Gotra, Urddhavahu, Savana, Anagha, Sutapa and Shukra were the seven great sages.

The fourth Manu was Tamasa. The gods of this era were the suravas, haris, satyas and sudhas and the title of Indra was held by Shibi. The seven great sages were Jyotirdhama, Prithu, Kavya, Chaitra, Agni, Varuna and Pivara.

In the fifth manvantara, the Manu was Raivata and the title of Indra was held by Vibhu. The gods were the bhutis and the vaikunthas and the seven great sages were Hiranyaroma, Vedashri, Urddhavahu, Vedavahu, Suvahu and Suparjanya. (The name of the seventh great sage is missing.)

The Manus Svarochisha, Uttama, Tamasa and Raivata were all descended from Svayambhuva Manu.

The sixth Manu was Chakshusha and the Indra then was Manojava. The gods were known as the adyas, prasutas, bhavyas, prithukas and lekhas. Sumedha, Vrija, Havishmana, Uttama, Madhu, Abhimana and Sahishnu were the seven great sages.

The seventh manvantara is the one that is now current and the Indra now is Purundara. The Manu is Shraddhadeva, the gods are the adityas, the vasus, the rudras and the maruts. The names of the seven great sages are Vashishtha, Kashyapa, Atri, Jamadagni, Goutama, Vishvamitra and Bharadvaja.

In the present kalpa, there will be seven more manvantaras in the future. Thereafter, the world will be destroyed.

(It should be mentioned that the names given in this section do not necessarily tally with the names given in the other Puranas. Not only do the names of the gods, the sages and the Indras differ, the names of the future manvantaras also sometimes differ from Purana to Purana.)

12.27 Vedavyasa

In every dvapara yuga, a Vedavyasa is born so as to divide the Vedas and disseminate their knowledge. In the present era, there have been twenty-eight dvapara yugas and there have therefore been twenty-eight individuals who have held the title of Vedavyasa. The Kurma Purana gives their names as follows.

(1) Svayambhuva Manu.
(2) Prajapati.
(3) Ushana.
(4) Brihaspati.
(5) Savita.
(6) Mrityu.
(7) Indra.
(8) Vashishtha.
(9) Sarasvata.
(10) Tridhama.
(11) Rishabha.
(12) Suteja.
(13) Dharma.
(14) Sachakshu.
(15) Trayaruni.
(16) Dhananjaya.
(17) Kritanjaya.
(18) Ritanjaya.
(19) Bharadvaja.
(20) Goutama.
(21) Vachashrava.
(22) Narayana.
(23) Trinavindu.
(24) Valmiki.
(25) Shaktri.
(26) Parashara.
(27) Jatukarna.
(28) Krishna Dvaipayana

Vedavyasa divided the Vedas into four parts and taught them to four of his disciples. He taught Paila the Rig Veda. Vaishampayana the Yajur Veda, Jaimini the Sama Veda and Sumantu the Atharva Veda. As for the Puranas, they were taught to Lomaharshana.

12.28 Shiva's Incarnations

Most Puranas only mention Vishnu's incarnations (avataras). The Kurma Purana is one of the rate ones which mentions Shiva's incarnations.

In each kali yuga, Shiva has had an incarnation. The names of these incarnations are as follows.

(1) Shveta.
(2) Sutara.
(3) Madana.
(4) Suhotra.
(5) Kankana.
(6) Lokakshi.

(7) Jaigishavya.
(8) Dadhivaha.
(9) Rishabha.
(10) Bhrigu.
(11) Ugra.
(12) Atri.
(13) Vali.
(14) Goutama.
(15) Vedashirsha.
(16) Gokarna.
(17) Shikhandaka.
(18) Jatamali.
(19) Attahasa.
(20) Daruka.
(21) Langali.
(22) Mahavama.
(23) Muni.
(24) Shuli.
(25) Pindamunishvara.
(26) Sahishnu.
(27) Somasharma.
(28) Nakulishvara.

12.29 The Ishvara Gita

While Lomaharshana was reciting the Kurma Purana to the assembled sages, Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa arrived on the scene. Lomaharshana and the other sages requested Vedavyasa to instruct them about the path to true knowledge. This is what Vedavyasa told them.

The paramatman (the divine soul) is the only truth. It is ever pure and ever present. It is from the paramatman that the universe is created and it is into the paramatman that the universe merges at the time of its destruction. The paramatman is not the earth. It is not water, energy, wind or sky. It cannot be touched, nor can it be sensed.

The paramatman is always present in the jivatman (human soul). Any sense of distinction between the paramatman and the jivatman is due to illusions and the presence of the ego. The truly learned rise above such illusions. Therefore, a wise person does not see any distinction between his own self and other objects. The same paramatman pervades everything. Just as all rivers unite with the ocean, a learned person realises that all individuals jivatmans unite with the paramatman.

Yoga (literally, union) is a technique of meditation that helps to bring about this sense of identity between the jivatman and the paramatman. Yoga has eight components. The first is pranayama. This means the control of one’s breath. The breath of life is known as prana and ayama means control. There are three

parts to any pranayama exercise. When the breath is being exhaled, that is known as rechaka; and the process of inhalation is known as puraka. When the breath is neither being inhaled nor exhaled, that is kumbhaka.

The second component of yoga is pratyahara. This connotes the control of one's senses. Yoga must always be performed in a proper posture and this is the third component of asana. The fourth component is called yama. This means the practice of non-violence, truthfulness and pity. The fifth component is known as niyama. This encompasses worship, studying the Vedas, cleanliness and meditation.

Yoga has a sixth component named dhyana. In this process, one conjures up an image of the paramatman and meditates continuously on it. The process of fixing this image in one's heart is the seventh component, dharana. And the final component, samadhi, is a situation where the individual realises the complete identity between the jivatman and the paramatman.

12.30 Rituals

The sacred thread (upavita) ceremony is very important and must always be performed at eight year of age. Brahma had created the cotton tree so that sacred threads might be made out of cotton. But on occasions it is permissible to make sacred threads out of grass.

A guru (teacher) is always to be respected and worshipped. In principle, a guru is anyone from whom knowledge might be gained. But apart from usual teachers, a father-in-law, a grandfather and an individual belonging to a superior varna are also recognised as gurus. A mother, a grandmother, a guru's wife, an aunt, a mother-in-law and the wife of an elder brother are recognised as being equivalent to a guru. One must a guru ever be show disrespect or argued with. A person who hates his guru is certain to go to hell.

Amongst gurus or those who are equivalent to gurus, the most important are a father, a mother, a teacher, an elder brother and a husband. These have to be respectfully served at all costs.

A brahmana must always wash his mouth after eating, drinking, sleeping, bathing, spitting or changing clothes. The mouth must also be washed before sitting down to study. It is also recommended that the mouth be washed after talking to those who do not believe in the Vedas, shudras, outcasts and women. If a mouthwash is not possible, one can cleanse oneself by touching a piece of clothing is touched inadvertently, the act of purification requires the touching of water, wet grass or the earth.

One of the most sacred mantras (incantations) that one can chant is the gayatri. Before chanting, thirty-two-cells must be drawn, as shown, and the letters of the mantra must be written down in the cells, as indicated. To recite the gayatri,

one now reads the letters as they occur in the numbered cells. That is, one starts with cell number one, moves to cell number two and so on and so forth.

5	13	21	29	28	20	12	4
vvr	sya	pra	se	ja	nah	va	tu
6	14	22	30	27	19	11	3
re	dhi	cho	sa	ra	yo	de	vi
7	15	23	31	26	18	10	2
ni	ma	da	va	ro	yo	rgo	tsa
8	16	24	32	25	17	9	1
yam	hi	yat	dom	pa	dhi	bha	ta

A person who kills a brahmana, drinks wine, or steals gold from a brahmana, has to perform penance by killing himself. A person who kills a brahmana may also build a hut in the forest and live there for a period of twelve years. But throughout the period, he has to bear a mark signifying the dead brahmana's head on his palm. He is also not permitted to visit another brahmana or a temple as long as the penance is going on. It needs to be mentioned that the sin of killing a brahmana can be thus pardoned only if the killing was done inadvertently. If the killing was conscious, no penance will suffice. Under such circumstances, the sinner had best immolate himself in a fire, drown himself, or fast to death.

For other sins, the observance of a religious rite (vrata) is often indicated. The major vratas are as follows.

(i) Santapana: This involves living for one whole day on cow's urine, cowdung, cow's milk, curds made from cow's milk and clarified butter made from cow's milk. The next day is a day of fasting.

(ii) Mahasantapana: This is a more severe version of the earlier vrata. In the case of santapana vrata, five items were listed as permissible food. Mahasantapana vrata lasts for a period of six days, and on each of these days, only one of the five items mentioned may be partaken of. The seventh day is day of fasting.

(iii) Prajapatya or krichha: If this vrata is to be observed, one can eat only during the day. For the first three days, one is only permitted to eat twenty-six handfuls of food, each handful being as large as a hen's egg.

For the next three days, twenty-two handfuls are permitted, but only in the evenings. And for the final three days, twenty-four handful are permitted.

(iv) Atikrichha: This is a more severe version of the earlier vrata. For the first three days, a single handful of food is permitted during the day. For the next three days, one handful is permitted in the evenings. One handfuls of food, each handful being as large as a hen's egg.

For the next three days, twenty-two handfuls are permitted, but only in the evenings. And for the final three days, three-four handfuls are permitted.

(v) Paraka: Twelve continuous days of fasting are required for this.

(vi) Taptakrichha: This vrata lasts for a period of twelve days, during which time one is permitted to bathe only once a day. For the first three days one drinks only water; for the next three days one lives on milk; one has to live on clarified butter for the ensuing three days are days of fasting.

(vii) Krichhatikrichha: If one is to observe this vrata, one has to live only on milk for the space of twenty-one days.

(viii) Padakrichha: This vrata lasts for four days. For the first day one eats only one meal; the second day is a day of fasting; on the third day one can eat as much as one wants; and on the fourth and final day, one fasts.

(ix) Chandrayana: This vrata lasts for an entire month and begins on the day of the full moon (purnima). On the first day, fifteen handfuls are to be eaten. Thereafter, one handfuls less is eaten on successive days, until on the day of new moon (amavasya), one fasts completely. On each day that follows, the amount of food eaten is increased by one handful. Finally, on the day of the next full moon, fifteen handfuls of food are eaten and the vrata is completed.

As mentioned earlier, those who kill brahmanas, steal their gold, or drink wine, are sinners. Also sinners are those who associate with these aforementioned sinners for more than one year. Those who associate with outcasts for more than a year are also sinners.

A brahmana who drinks wine should drink boiling wine as a penance. It is also permitted to drink cow's urine as atonement. A person who steals gold from brahmanas will go to the king and confess his guilt. His penance will be completed when the king beats him to death with a club. The only exception is a case where the thief himself happens to be a brahmana. He can then perform penance by meditating. It is always a king's duty to punish sinners. If the king fails in this task, the sins vest with the king.

A person who associates with sinners has to observe taptakrichha vrata for one year. A man who takes on outcast for a wife has to observe taptakrichha or santapana. A brahmana who kills a kshatriya is required to observe prajapatya, santapana or taptakrichha for one year. In case the victim is a vaishya, krichhatikrichha or chandrayana are indicated. If a shudra is killed, five hundred

cows have to be donated. If an elephant is killed, taptakrichha vrata has to be observed. Chandrayana will suffice if a cow is killed inadvertently. But if a cow is consciously killed, there is no penance that is adequate.

For minor thefts, the stolen goods have to be returned to the rightful owner and santapana observed. But if a brahmana steals foodgrains, he has to observe prajapatya for an entire year. A cannibal can purity himself through chandrayana vrata. A person who eats the meat of a crow, dog or elephant, has to observe taptakrichha. Santapana is for those who happen to eat mongooses, owls or cats. An eater of camels or donkeys observes taptakrichha.

A brahmana who becomes an atheist can cleanse himself through prajapatya. If he revolts against the gods or against his guru, the act of purification involves taptakrichha. A brahmana who recites the Puranas to outcasts has to observe chandrayana.

There are several other forms of penance that are catalogued by the Kurma Purana.

12.31 The Sita who was an Illusion

It is certain that you know the story of the Ramayana and you therefore also known that Ravana, the king of lanka, abducted Sita, Rama's wife. But you certainly do not know the story of the Sita who was an illusion (maya sita).

This story clearly illustrates that no harm can come to a person who is righteous.

Ravana disguised himself as a hermit and came to abduct Sita. But Sita got to know of Ravana's plan and was determined to foil it. She therefore began to pray to Agni, the god of fire.

Thus stirred by Sita's prayers, Agni appeared and produced a Sita who was really an illusion. This maya sita he left in the real Sita's place. As for the real Sita, she was absorbed into the fire. Without realising the substitutions, Ravana abducted the illusory Sita and the entire war was fought over a Sita who was not even real.

When Rama triumphed over Ravana and recovered Sita, a test by fire (agni pariksha) was held.

In the process, the sita who was an illusion was returned to the fire and the real Sita emerged once again. Thus the real Sita was never tainted by Ravana's touch.

(The story of the Sita who was an illusion is also given in the Brahmavaivarta Purana).

12.32 Shiva and Brahma

Many years ago, Brahma lost his head slightly. He began to imagine that he was superior to Shiva and Vishnu. He told all the sages, “I am the supreme godhead. There is no one else but me.”

While Brahma was thus instructing the sages, Vishnu arrived and was enraged at Brahma’s behaviour. “You are indeed ignorant,” he told Brahma. “I am the supreme godhead. You are only the creator. But I am, after all, the preserver.”

While Vishnu and Brahma were thus arguing the four Vedas adopted animate forms and appeared before them. Each of the Vedas tried to persuade Brahma and Vishnu that Shiva was superior to both of them. Vishnu was persuaded by this reasoning, but Brahma was not.

He told the Vedas, “You must be joking. How can Shiva be superior to the two of us? He is always wandering around with ghosts and demons for companions.”

While all this was going on, who should arrive but Shiva? Brahma promptly proceeded to insult Shiva. Shiva then created a being named Kalabhairava from his own body and Kalabhairava started to fight with Brahma. In those days, Brahma used to have five heads. In course of the fighting, Kalabhairava chopped off one of Brahma’s heads. Ever since that day, Brahma has had four heads and four faces.

(In many other Puranas, there is no mention of Kalabhairava. shiva performed the chopping off himself).

Brahma died as soon as his head had been cut off. Shiva did manage to revive him. But the mere fact that Shiva had killed Brahma, meant that Shiva and committed the sin of killing Brahma, a brahmana. As a result of this sin, Brahma’s severed head got stuck to Kalabhairava’s palm and would not be dislodged. (In accounts where Shiva was himself responsible for the Killing, the severed head adhered to Shiva’s palm).

Kalabhairava roamed around the world and the head accompanied him on his travels. for a thousand years of the gods, Kalabhairava continued to travel. Eventually, Vishnu advised Kalabhairava to go to the sacred city of Varanasi.

As soon as Kalabhairava arrived at the city of Varanasi, the head (kapala) got dislodged (mochana). A tirtha is a place of pilgrimage. The exact spot where this wonderful happening took place is accordingly known as Kapalamochana tirtha.

There are many other tirthas that the Kurma Purana describes, Among these are Prayaga, Kurukshetra, Gaya and Madhuvana (Mathura), The glories of the river Narmada are also described. The waters of the river Sarasvati purify a sinner after three days of bathing, while the waters of the river Yamuna takes

an entire week. The mere touch of a drop of water from the river Ganga purifies a sinner. But as for the river Narmada, the sight of the waters alone is enough.

12.33 Nandi

There used to be a sage named Shilada. He was righteous and learned in the shastras.

To obtain a son, Shilada began to pray to shiva. The tapasya went on for a thousand years and shiva appeared before Shilada.

“I am pleased with your meditation.” said shiva, “what boon do you desire?”

“Please grant me the boon that I may obtain a son who will not be born from a mother. “ replied Shilada, “And my son should be immortal.”

Shiva granted the desired boon.

When shilada was ploughing the land, a handsome boy suddenly appeared on the top of his plough. The four directions shone with the boy’s radiance and the boy began to address shilada as “father”.

The son studied the shastras and became learned. He was given the name of Nandi.

Nandi wished to see shiva and he also wished to become immortal. He therefore went to the shores of the ocean and started to pray to shiva. He chanted the required mantra one crore times.

When Shiva appeared and wished to grant a boon. Nandi said. “Please grant me enough of life so that I can chant the mantra one crore times more.”

Shiva appeared once again, and Nandi desired the same boon.

When this had happened three times. Shiva said, “Enough is enough. There is no need for any more chanting of incantations. I make you immortal, I also make you a ganapati, lord over the ganas. You will be my constant companion.”

The place where Nandi chanted the incantation has become famous as japyeshvara tirtha.

The maruts had a daughter named Suyasha. Shiva himself arranged that Nandi should be married to Suyasha.

12.34 Epilogue

Vishnu completed his recital of the Kurma Purana and the sages saluted him. They sung his praise.

The Kurma Purana is most sacred. a person who reads it attains Brahmaloka. A person who reads only one chapter of the text is forgiven all his sins. Undying punya is attained by an individual who donates this Purana to brahmanas in the months of Vaishakha or Kartika. Particularly sacred is the part that is known as the brahmi samhita.

But the text should never be read or recited in the presence of shudras. A person who ignores this injunction will surely go to hell. There is also a similar injunction about reciting the text to those who are disbelievers (that is, those who do not believe in the Vedas), a person who violates this injunction will be born as a dog in his next life.

You will almost certainly not be interested in donating the Kurma Purana to brahmanas in the months of Vaishakha or Kartika. But I hope you have found the stories interesting enough for you to which to read the text in the original.

13 Matsya Purana

It's the sixteenth Purana. During the period of Mahapralaya, Lord Vishnu had taken Matsya avatar (fish incarnation) to save the seeds of all lives and Manu. Matsya Purana contains a comprehensive description of Manu and Matsya avatar.

General contents of this Purana are Description of the greatness of Narsimh incarnation. Description of all the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Greatness of fasting like Anant Tritiya and the places of pilgrimage like Prayag. Tales of Chandra vansh, Surya vansh and Kuru vansh and the kings like Yayati, Kartveerya etc. Description of the Kalpa and Yugas. Appearance of idols. Appearance and construction of Deva-mandapa (canopy for the deities). Tale of Savitri and Satyavan. Results of auspicious and inauspicious motion of the planets. Birth of Parvati. Immolation of Madan (Kamadeva) Wedding of Lord Shiva with Parvati. Birth of Kartikeya. Duties of a king. Description of the future kings.

This Purana is said to be narrated by Matsya avatar of Lord Vishnu to Manu, who was awaiting Lord's arrival during Mahapralaya in his boat anchored on a very high mountain.

<WORK IN PROGRESS...>

According to the Matsya Purana (47.32), "When the end of an Age rolls around and time has lost its strength, then Lord Vishnu is born among men. When the gods and demons go to war, then Hari [Vishnu] is born."

The Matsya Purana (47.32-52), for instance, enumerates twelve avatars.

Matsya Purana (221.2), Prosperity forsakes those who always dream of fate and favors those who persevere. One should therefore always be active and alert.

Matsya Purana (180.5-7), Even the worst problems have solutions if one only perseveres.

Matsya Purana (53.65,68,69):

A Purana has five characteristics as opposed to an Akhyana. (The scriptures are divided into three classes - sattvika, rajasika, and tamasika.) The glory of Lord Hari is greater in the sattvika Puranas; the glory of Lord Brahma is more in the rajasika Puranas; the glory of Lord Siva and Agni is more in the tamasika Puranas. In the mixed scriptures the glory of Sarasvati and the Pitrs is explained."

The verse cited from the Matsya Purana refers to the five characteristics of a Purana. These characteristics are given in another verse of the Matsya Purana, 53.65:

sargasca pratisargasca vamso manvantarani ca

vamsyanucaritancaiva puranam pancalaksanam

"Creation, dissolution, genealogy, manvantaras and descriptions of the activities of famous kings, these are the five characteristics of a Purana."

The characteristics of Srimad Bhagavatam are given in the Matsya Purana (53.20-22), "That which explains the topmost principles of religion, basing it on Gayatri, and which has the incident of the killing of Vrtrasura is to be known as the Srimad Bhagavatam. This Purana has eighteen thousand verses. Whoever makes a copy of the Srimad Bhagavatam and, placing it on a golden lion throne, donates it on the full moon day in the month of Bhadra (August-September), will attain the supreme goal".

According to Matsya Purana (Chapter 53) the Hayagriva avatara of Visnu preceded Matsya; when the worlds were burnt down, Visnu in the form of a horse re-compiled the four Vedas, Vedangas, etc. The Devi Bhagavata and the Skanda Purana in its Dharnmranya Khanda, however, allude to two different accounts on the origin of the Hayagriva form of Visnu.

This Purana consists of xx chapters:

13.1Chapter

text

13.1.1 Section

text

14 Garuda Purana

This Purana contains 14 Chapters – each with many sub-sections.

14.1Introduction

This chapter contains xx sections as follows:

14.1.1 Lord Vishnu's Incarnations

Sutji once reached Naimisharanya in course of his pilgrimage. There he found numerous sages engaged in austerities and penance. All of them were delighted to find Sutji in their midst and considered it as a God sent opportunity to get their doubts related with religious topics cleared. Sage Shaunak was also present there and he asked Sutji –' O revered sage! Who is the creator of this world? Who nurtures it and who annihilates it in the end? How can one realize the supreme Almighty? How many incarnations the Almighty has taken till now? Please enlighten us on all these things, which are shrouded in mystery.'

Sutji replied–' I am going to reveal to you the contents of Garuda Puran, which contains the divine tales of Lord Vishnu. This particular Puran is named after Garuda because he was the one who first narrated these tales to sage Kashyap. Kashyap subsequently narrated them to sage Vyas. I came to know about these divine tales from sage Vyas. Lord Vishnu is the supreme almighty and the source of all creations. He is the nurturer of this world and the annihilator as well. Though he is beyond the bondage of birth and death yet he takes incarnations to protect the world from the tyranny of sinners. His first incarnation was in the form of the eternal adolescent Sanat kumar and others who were all celibates and extremely virtuous.'

'Lord Vishnu took his second incarnation in the form of a boar (Varah) to protect the Earth from the mighty demon named Hiranyaksha, who had abducted her to Patal loka (Nether world). In his third incarnation as Narad, he propagated the virtues of 'nishkaam karma' (performing one's duties without bothering about the results). In his fourth incarnation as Nar-Narayan, he performed arduous austerities for the protection and propagation of Dharma or religiousness.

Lord Vishnu's fifth incarnation was as Kapil, which he took to protect the Saankhya shashtra, which was on the verge of becoming extinct. He took his sixth incarnation in the house of Atri and Anusuya as Dattatreya with the specific objective of propagating the most secret Brahma vidya to worthy people. His disciples included virtuous souls like Prahalad and others. Lord Vishnu took his seventh incarnation as the son of Ruchi Prajapati and Aakuti and was known as Yagya deva. His eighth incarnation was as Rishabh deva- the son of sage Naabhi and Merudevi.

In this incarnation he established the norms for Grihashtha ashram, which later on became the guidelines for every householders. Lord Vishnu took his ninth incarnation as Prithu and 'milked'(extracted) various nutrients (cereals, pulses

etc.) from the Earth who had disguised herself as a cow and thus protected the populace from getting starved to death.

In his tenth incarnation as Matsya (fish), he protected the life of Vaivaswat Manu, who would not have survived otherwise. Lord Vishnu took his eleventh incarnation in the form of a tortoise (kurma) and held the Mandarachal mountain on his back at the time when the ocean was being churned. His twelfth incarnation was as Dhanvantari and thirteenth as the most enchanting beauty- Mohini to retrieve the ambrosia pot from the possession of the demons. He subsequently distributed it among the deities as the result of which they became immortal.

In his fourteenth incarnation, Lord Vishnu manifested himself as 'Nrisimha' (partly human and partly lion) and to protect his devotee- Prahlad killed the wicked demon Hiranyakashipu by tearing apart his abdomen with his sharp claws. His fifteenth incarnation was as Vaman (dwarf) in which he demanded all the three worlds from Bali-the most benevolent demon king and then sent him to Patal loka. In his sixteenth incarnation as Parshuram, he wiped out the whole caste of kshatriyas from the face of the earth for twenty-one times, as they had all become immoral.

In his seventeenth incarnation he was born as Vyas to Parashar and Satyavati and accomplished his mission of propagating the knowledge of Vedas by categorizing them into four parts. In his eighteenth incarnation he manifested himself as Sri Ram. His nineteenth incarnation was as Krishna and his twentieth incarnation as Balram. He will take his twenty-first incarnation as Buddha to bring the mankind back to virtuous path by preaching against the rituals and proving that it is not proper for a seeker to get bound by them. Lord Vishnu would take incarnation as Kalki and will be born to a Brahmin named Vishnuyasha to liberate the earth from the sinners.'

14.1.2 How Garuda Purana was propagated

On being asked by the sages as to how did he come to know about the contents of Garuda Puran, Sutji told them–' Once, I had gone to Badrikashram, where I met sage Vyas. I requested him to enlighten me on various spiritual matters to which he agreed saying that he was going to narrate the tales of Garuda Purana which was first told by Lord Brahma to Narad, Daksha Prajapati and myself. Sage Vyas then told Sutji how once he along with Narad, Daksha and Bhrigu had gone to Brahmaloka to see Lord Brahma. After reaching there, all three of them requested Lord Brahma to shed light on the essence of the real knowledge.

Lord Brahma revealed to them that Garuda Puran contained the essence of all the scriptures and Lord Vishnu himself had narrated its divine tales to him (Brahma). Describing the incident when Lord Vishnu had told the divine tales of Garuda Puran to him as well as Shiva, Lord Brahma said– ' I once went to Kailash mountain accompanied by Indra and other deities. We found Shiva

engrossed in his meditation. We were amazed and asked him as to who was he meditating upon.

Lord Shiva told us that he was meditating upon the omnipresent, omniscient and the omnipotent Vishnu- in whom the entire universe exists. Lord Shiva also revealed to us that this was all he knew of Vishnu's power and also that if we wanted to know more about him then we will have to ask Lord Vishnu himself. So, all of us including Shiva went to Vishnu loka and requested Lord Vishnu to clear our doubts on various topics which confused us. Lord Vishnu gave a long discourse covering all the major religious topics.

14.1.3 Lord Vishnu reveals his omnipotent nature

Dwelling on length about his power, Lord Vishnu told Shiva– ' O Rudra! I am the lord of all the deities. I am the one who controls each and every event that occurs in the Universe. I am the one whom mortals worship with the desire of attaining salvation. The universe would have ceased to exist but for me. I am the creator, the nurturer as well as the supreme annihilator. I manifest myself in the sacred mantras as well as their meanings. People meditate on me. Matter is nothing but a medium through which I manifest myself.'

14.1.4 Lord Vishnu Blesses Garuda

Describing how Garuda pleased him with his deep devotion, Lord Vishnu said– 'During ancient times Garuda once did an austere penance to please me. I appeared before him and expressed my willingness to fulfil anything that he wished for. Garuda wanted to liberate his mother, Vinta from the slavery of Kadru-the mother of serpents. He also wanted to avenge his mother's humiliation at their hands. He also expressed his desire of becoming immortal by having a Purana credited to his name and finally he requested me to give him the privilege of becoming my mount. I blessed Garuda as the result of which all his wishes were fulfilled. Once, on being requested by sage Kashyap, Garuda narrated the divine tales of Garuda Puran to him. Sage Kashyap had once brought back a dead tree back to life with the help of Garudi Vidya- a sacred mantra found in Garuda Puran. Similarly, Garuda too had brought numerous dead creatures back to life with the help of same mantra.'

14.1.5 The Beginning of Creation

Lord Shiva requested Vishnu to shed light on different topics like Sarga (world), Pratisarga, Vansh (dynasties), Manvantar (fourteenth part of Brahma's day) and Vanshanucharit (genealogy). Lord Vishnu replied–' O Rudra! Lord Vasudeva in his incarnation of Nara-Narayan performs his responsibilities of the creator, protector as well as the annihilator. Each particle that is found in this universe whether perceptible or imperceptible is nothing but the medium through which the Almighty makes his presence felt. In the beginning of the creation, on account of HIS will subtle matter of nature (imperceptible) came into being. HE is the one to whom 'Atma' or 'Purush' owe its existence. Subsequently, intelligence or 'Buddhi' manifested itself from the subtle matter of nature, mind or 'Mun' from intelligence, space or 'Aakash' from mind, air or 'Vayu' from

Space, Fire or 'Teja' from air, water from 'Teja' and finally the earth manifested itself from water.'

' O Rudra! Then came into existence an enormous sized egg. I dwell within that egg and so do all the other deities. In fact, the whole universe is situated within that egg. The almighty Vishnu creates in the form of Brahma, nurtures in the form of Vishnu and annihilates in the form of Shiva at the end of each kalpa. The creations of the almighty are known as 'Sargas'. First of all, the almighty creates the Mahat tatva, which symbolizes his gross quality.

Since it was his first creation therefore it was called the first Sarga. The second Sarga consisted of the creation of the Panch-Tanmatras or the five basic elements- Earth (Prithvi), Water(Jala), Fire(Teja), Air(Vayu) and Sound(Shabda). These five basic elements are the stuffs from which matter is made. The third Sarga namely Vaikarik sarga comprising the creation of all the sense organs and the organs of the actions, is basically intelligence oriented, because the sense organs can not function without intelligence. All these above mentioned three sargas come under the category of Prakrit sarga or natural creation.' ' The fourth sarga is known as Mukhya sarga or the main creation and consisted of immovable things like mountains, trees, etc. The fifth Sarga is known as Tiryak sarga and consisted of animals and birds. The sixth sarga comprised the creation of the deities and other celestial beings and hence it is also known as Deva sarga. The seventh sarga comprised the creation of human beings and hence it was called Maanush sarga. The eighth sarga, which is also called Anugrah sarga, consisted of creations that are both 'satvik' (pure) and 'tamasik'(dark) in nature. The ninth sarga is called Kaumar sarga.'

' Lord Brahma commenced his creation of supreme entities by expressing his will resulting into the manifestation of all the ten Manasputras. Subsequently, Lord Brahma created different other entities like deities (deva), demons (danav), ancestors (pitra) and human-beings (manushya). He then created the Ashuras from his thighs and subsequently abandoned his body. The dark qualities emanating from the body resulted into the creation of night, a creation that immensely pleased the demons.'

' Lord Brahma then attained a new physical form, which was pure (satvik) in nature. He created the deities from his mouth and once again abandoned his body resulting into the creation of day this time. All the deities became extremely pleased by this particular creation of Brahma. Once again Lord Brahma attained another form and created the 'pitras' and when he abandoned that body, 'sandhya' (evening) manifested from it.'

'Lord Brahma then attained a form that was 'Rajomaya' in nature and created human beings. His abandoning that particular form resulted into the creation of 'Pratahkaal'(dawn). Subsequently, Lord Brahma created the different species like 'yaksha', 'sarpa', 'Gandharva' and 'Apsaras' and many more creatures from the different parts of his body. All the four Vedas namely Rigveda, Yajurveda,

Samveda and Atharvaveda manifested themselves from each of Brahma's four mouths. Similarly, all the four castes such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra manifested from Brahma's mouth, arms, thighs and feet respectively.'

14.1.6 The Beginning of Copulative Creation

'Having created Daksha Prajapati and his wife Prasuti from his right and left thumb respectively, Lord Brahma instructed both of them to make their contribution in increasing the population with the help of copulative creation. In course of time, Daksha Prajapati begot numerous daughters all of whom were given in marriage to ten Manasputras.'

'Once, Daksha Prajapati had organized a grand Ashwamedha Yagya to which he had invited all his daughters and son-in-laws except Sati and Rudra. Sati eventually reached her father's place much against the advise of Shiva, who was strictly against going to a place uninvited. Shiva's apprehensions were not unfounded supposition, as Sati was indeed humiliated by Daksha in front of all the esteemed guests. Sati was so deeply hurt by her father's rude behaviour and the manner in which he made fun of her husband that she gave up her life by jumping into the sacrificial fire. When Rudra learnt about Sati's death he cursed Daksha by saying that he would loose his divine status and would be born as a human being in the lineage of Dhruva. In her next birth, Sati was born as the daughter of Himalaya and Mainak. She was once again successful in getting Shiva as her husband by virtue of her deep devotion towards Shiva.'

14.1.7 The Dhruva Dynasty

Lord Vishnu, continuing with the tales of Garuda Puran told Shiva-' Uttanpad had two wives-Suruchi and Suniti. From his former wife he begot a son named Uttam, while Suniti gave birth to Dhruva, who became immortal because of his unflinching devotion in me. Dhruva had a mighty son named 'Shlishta'. Prachinvarhi was Shlishta's son and Dhruva's grandson. Few other prominent personalities coming from the lineage of Dhruva were- Udardhi, Divanjaya, Ripu, Chakshush, Ruru, Anga, Ven etc. Ven was an atheist and was eventually killed by sages for his immoral deeds. Since Ven had no progeny, his death put a question mark on his successor. Sages tried to solve this problem by churning his thighs, which resulted into the emergence of Nishad. But, Nishad went to Vindhyachal to do penance. Seeing their whole effort go in vain, all the sages once again churned Ven's hands. This time Lord Vishnu himself incarnated as Prithu.'

' Prithu was an extremely kind hearted king and cared for his subjects. Once, when his kingdom was experiencing an acute famine, he successfully extracted the essential nutrients from the earth and thus saved his subjects from starvation. Prithu had ten sons prominent among whom were Antardhan, Havirdhan, Prachinvarhi and Praachetas. In course of time Praachetas married Marisha.'

' Just according to the curse of Shiva, Daksha Prajapati was reborn in the clan of

Dhruva. His father's name was Praachetas and his mother was Marisha. In the beginning, Daksha Prajapati tried to do creation by merely expressing his will but his efforts went futile because of Shiva's curse. So, he had no option but to take the help of copulative creation and to meet his objective he married Asikni- the daughter of Viran.

In course of time he became the father of one thousand sons, all of whom perished while on their impossible mission of finding out the circumference of the earth. Actually sage Narad had incited all of them to undertake this impossible mission. Daksha though angry did not loose heart and in course of time he once again fathered one thousand sons. Once again, Narad was successful in convincing them to emulate the deeds of their elder brothers. All of them set out on an impossible mission never to return. Now, Daksha's anger crossed all limits and he cursed Narad by saying that he would take birth as a human for inciting his sons' to death. This is the reason why Narad was born as Kashyap's son.'

' In the years to follow, Daksha Prajapati begot sixty beautiful daughters from Asikni among whom he gave away two daughters in marriage to sage Angira, two to sage Krishashva, ten to Dharma, fourteen to sage Kashyap and twenty-eight daughters to Chandrama. The names of Krishashva's wives were Supragya and Jaya while Dharma's wives were Arundhati, Vasu, Yami, Lamba, Bhanumati, Marutvati, Sankalpa, Muhurta, Saadhya and Vishva. The names of Kashyap's wives were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kala, Anayu, Sinhika, Muni, Kadru, Saadhya, Ira, Krodha, Vinta, Surabhi and Khaga.'

Dharma's wives Vishva and Saadhya gave birth to the Vishvedevas and Saadhyaganas respectively. Similarly, Marutvati gave birth to Marutvaans and Vasu to Vasuganas. Dharma's wife named Bhanu gave birth to twelve Bhanus while Muhurta gave birth to Muhurtaganas. Lamba gave birth to Ghosh while Yami gave birth to Naagvithi. Sankalpa gave birth to Sankalpa.

Kashyap's wife Aditi gave birth to twelve Aadityas while Diti gave birth to two sons (demons)- Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. Diti also had a daughter named Sinhika, who was married to Viprachiti. Hiranyakashipu had four sons- Anuhlad, Hlad, Prahlad and Sanhlad. Aayushman, Shibi and Bashkal were the sons of Sanhlad. Prahlad had a mighty son named Virochan who himself had a son named Bali. Bali had one hundred sons in all and Baan was the eldest among them. Hiranyaksha had six sons all of whom were very brave and valiant. Their names were Utkur, Shakuni, Bhutsantapan, Mahanam, Mahabahu and Kaalnaam.

Danu had numerous sons who were all very brave-Dwimurdha, Shankar, Ayomukh, Shankushira, Kapil, Shambar, Ekachakra, Mahabahu, Tarak, Mahabal, Swarbhanu, Vrishaparva, Puloma, Mahasur and the mightiest among them-Viprachiti. Puloma and Kalka, both daughters of Vaishwanar were married to sage Kashyap. Kashyap had sixty thousand sons (demons) from both of

them. Demons such as Nighat Kavach came from the lineage of Prahlad. Tamra had six daughters and their names were Shuki, Shyeni, Masi, Sugrivi, Shuchi and Gridhika. Shuki gave birth to numerous species of birds like Shuka (Parrot), Uluka (owls) and Kaak(crows). Similarly Shyeni gave birth to Shyen (hawks) and Gridhika to Gridh (vultures). Shuchi was the mother of aquatic birds while Sugrivi gave birth to various animals like, horses, camels, donkeys, etc.' Arun and Garuda were born to Vinta while Sursa and Kadru gave birth to serpents. Krodha gave birth to powerful Pishachas, Surabhi to cows and buffaloes, Era to various vegetation like, creepers and grass, Khaga to Yakshas and Rakshas, Muni to Apsaras and Arishta gave birth to Gandharvas. Diti gave birth to fourty-nine Marutganas, all of whom are in fact the incarnations of Lord Vishnu.

14.2 Powerful Mantras

This chapter contains 4 sections as follows:

14.2.1 Navgrah Mantra

Describing the significance of worshipping Navgraha (nine planets), Lord Vishnu told Rudra –' One who worships the Navgraha with appropriate rituals attains all the four 'purusharth'(objectives of man's life)-dharma(religion), artha(money), kaam(sex) and moksha(salvation).' He then went on to give various mantras related with the Navgrahas, which a devotee should chant while worshipping them –

SURYA(SUN) – OM SURYA MURTAYE NAMAH.
OM HRAM HRIM SAH SURYAY NAMAH.

CHANDRAMA(MOON)– OM SOMAY NAMAH.

BHAUM(MARS)–OM BHAUMAY NAMAH.

BUDDH(MERCURY)–OM BUDDHAY NAMAH.

VRIHASPATI(JUPITER)–OM VRIHASPATAYE NAMAH.

SHUKRA(VENUS)–OM SHUKRAY NAMAH.

SHANI(SATURN)–OM SHANAISHCHARAY NAMAH.

RAHU(DRAGON'S HEAD)–OM RAHAVE NAMAH.

KETU(DRAGON'S TAIL)– OM KETAVE NAMAH.

14.2.2 Shiva Mantra

There are various mantras used in the rituals of Shiva worship. A devotee should begin by worshipping the 'Aasan' (the pedestal) on which the deity is seated. There is a specific mantra for this particular ritual- OM HRAM SHIVAY NAMAH. Subsequently, a salutation to lord Shiva is made by chanting - OM SHIVA

MURTAYE NAMAH. A special ritual named 'Shadanganyas' is then performed by chanting different mantras associated with the specific parts of the deities' body such as -

OM HRAM HRIDAYAY NAMAH,
OM HRIM SHIRSE SWAHA,
OM HOOM SHIKHAYAI VASHAT,
OM HRAIM KAVACHAY HOOM,
OM HRAUM NETRA TRAYAY VAUSHAT,
OM HRAH ASTRAY PHAT.

Having accomplished the above mentioned rituals, a devotee should then worship each of the five faces of Shiva by chanting the following mantras -

OM HRAM SADDYOJATAY NAMAH
OM HRIM VAAMDEVAY NAMAH,
OM HOOM AGHORAY NAMAH,
OM HRAIM TATPURUSHAY NAMAH,
OM HRAUM ISHANAY NAMAH.
VISHNU MANTRA

While worshipping Lord Vishnu, first of all a devotee should worship the 'Aasan' of the deity by chanting
- OM VASUDEVA AASANAY NAMAH.

He should then make salutations to Lord Vishnu by chanting the following mantras–
OM VASUDEVAY MURTAYE NAMAH,
OM AIM OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VASUDEVAY NAMAH,
OM AAM OM NAMO BHAGAVATE SANKARSHANAY NAMAH,
OM AIM OM NAMO BHAGAVATE PRADYUMNAY NAMAH,
OM AH OM NAMO BHAGAVATE ANIRUDDHAY NAMAH.

Subsequently, a devotee should worship the various incarnations of Lord Vishnu, his weapons as well as his different mounts by incorporating the rituals of 'Shodashopachar' and by chanting the following mantras–

OM NARAYANAY NAMAH,
OM TATSAD BRAHMANE NAMAH,
OM HOOM VISHNAVE NAMAH,
OM HRAUM NAMO BHAGAVATE NRISINHAY NAMAH,
OM BHUH OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VARAHAY NAMAH, ETC.

14.2.3 Sarasvati Mantra

A devotee should begin his worship by making salutations to goddess Sarswati by chanting– OM HRIM SARSWATYAI NAMAH.

He should then perform the rituals of 'Shadangnyas' by chanting the following mantras– OM HRAM HRIDAYAY NAMAH,
OM HRIM SHIRSE SWAHA,
OM HOOM SHIKHAYAI VASHAT,
OM HRAIM KAVACHAY HOOM,
OM HRAUM NETRA TRAYAY VAUSHAT,
OM HRAH ASTRAY PHAT.

14.2.4 Laxmi Mantra

A devotee desirous of acquiring wealth and prosperity must worship Goddess Laxmi with appropriate rituals. He should begin by making salutations to the goddess by chanting the following mantra –

OM SRIM HRIM MAHALAKSHMYAI NAMAH.

Then follows the rituals of 'Shadangnyas' that is performed by chanting the specific mantras meant for them.

14.3 Astrology in Garuda Purana

This chapter contains 11 sections as follows:

14.3.1 The Chariots of Navgrahas

While describing the chariots of all the nine planets, Lord Vishnu told Rudra–' The chariot of Surya deva(sun) has an unbelievable expanse stretching up to nine thousand yojans. The axle of the chariot is one crore and fifty seven lakh yojans long and wheels are fixed at both its ends. The wheels have six circumferences symbolizing the six main seasons and five spokes symbolizing the five different units of time measurement in them. The chariot of Surya(sun) is pulled by seven horses. These horses symbolize the seven 'chhands' (stanzas used in poetry)- gayatri, vrihati, ushnik, jagati, trishtup, anushtup and pankti.

The chariot of chandrama(moon) has three wheels in it. It is pulled by ten white horses. The color of Mangal's(mars) chariot is golden and is pulled by horses of dark red color. Buddh's(mercury) chariot is of brown color and is pulled by eight horses of the same color. The chariot of Vrihaspati(jupiter) is made of gold and is pulled by eight horses of yellowish complexion. Jupiter remains in each of the twelve zodiacs for a year.

Shukra's (venus) chariot is well escorted by his army. The chariot has a mast on it's top and is pulled by horses that are found on earth.

- Horses pulling the chariot of Shani(saturn) are of varicolored.
- The chariot of Rahu is pulled by eight horses, which are of the color of smoke.
- The chariot of Ketu is pulled by eight horses, which are red in color.

14.3.2 Description of Yogas and Muhurtas

Giving elaborate description of inauspicious days on which one should not undertake travels or journeys, Lord Vishnu told Shiva– 'Various Yoginis (goddesses) dwell in different directions on specific days and one should never set out on journeys on those days. A yogini named Brahmani dwells in the East on Pratipada(first) and navami(ninth) of both the fortnights of each month and nobody should travel on both these dates towards east. Maheshwari dwells in the north on second and ninth of both the fortnights of each month and hence nobody should travel towards north on both these dates. Varahi dwells in the south on the fifth and thirteenth of both the fortnights of each month and hence it is unadvisable to travel towards south on the above mentioned dates. In the same manner, Indrani dwells in the west on sixth and fourteenth of both the fortnights of each month and therefore nobody should travel in this direction on both the above mentioned dates.'

While giving names of some auspicious Nakshatras suitable for undertaking journeys, lord Vishnu said–' Constellations like Ashvini, Anuradha, Revati, Mrigashira, Mool, Punarvasu, Pushya, Hast and Jyeshtha are auspicious for undertaking journeys.'

Lord Vishnu, giving some specific combinations of days and tithis considered to be inauspicious said-' One should never travel on the following inauspicious days: Dwadashi falling on Sunday or Ekadashi falling on Monday or Navami falling on Wednesday or Ashtami falling on Thursday or Saptami falling on Friday and Shashthi falling on Saturday.

14.3.3 Amrit Yoga

It is the most auspicious yoga for commencing any work. The conjunction of a particular day and specific nakshatra constitute this yoga. Few examples of Amrit yoga are Mool nakshatra falling on Sunday, Shravan nakshatra on Monday, Uttara bhadrapad on Tuesday, Kritika on Wednesday, Punarvasu on Thursday, Purvafalguni on Friday and Swati nakshatra falling on Saturday.

14.3.4 Visha Yoga

It is considered to be an inauspicious yoga and unsuitable for commencing any important work. Few examples of this particular yoga are Bharni nakshatra falling on Friday, Chitra nakshatra on Monday, Uttarashadha on Tuesday, Dhanishtha on Wednesday, Shatabhisha on Thursday, Rohini on Friday and Revati nakshatra falling on Saturday.

14.3.5 Graha Dasha

Describing the period for which a particular planet is supposed to have its influence on the native, Lord Vishnu told Shiva– ' Surya's dasha continues for six years and brings turbulence, turmoil and agony to the concerned person. Moon's dasha continues for fifteen years and is considered very auspicious as it brings happiness and prosperity. Mangal's dasha is considered inauspicious and lasts for eight years. It brings sorrow and misfortune. Buddh's dasha is

auspicious and lasts for seventeen years. It brings all kinds of favorable results and is extremely rewarding in every respect. Shani's dasha lasts for ten years and brings all kinds of inauspicious results to a man. Vrihaspati's dasha continues for nineteen years and is extremely auspicious. Rahu's dasha continues for twelve years and is inauspicious. Shukra's dasha lasts for twenty years and is auspicious.'

NOTE – The period of years stated in the above mentioned Graha- dashas are at variance from those mentioned by sage Parashar, which is in practice nowadays.

14.3.6 Predictions based on Physical Traits

Dwelling on length about the importance of physical traits and symptoms apparent in an individual, Lord Vishnu told Shiva-' If one sees the following physical traits in a man, he should immediately understand that he is seeing a prospective King : Hands and feet as soft as a Lotus flower, pink nails and no space left between the fingers when kept straight. There is no sign of bulging veins on his hands and palms and they do not sweat excessively. On the contrary, a person having rough feet that appears pale, with prominent veins on them indicates that the concerned person would be poor and miserable.'

14.3.7 Predicting Age with the help of Forehead Line

Lord Vishnu said-' Anybody having three parallel lines on his forehead lives happily for sixty years whereas two parallel lines indicates that he would live till the age of forty years. Only one line on the forehead indicates that he would have a short life but if the line stretches up to both the ears then he lives for a century. If two parallel lines on the forehead stretches up to both the years then the concerned person lives for seventy years while a triple parallel lines reaching both the years indicates that he would live till the age of sixty years. A forehead devoid of any line on it means that the concerned person would live for only forty years while a cobweb of intersecting lines on the forehead indicates that the concerned person is definite to die a premature death. A forehead with a Trident or an Axe mark on it indicates that the concerned person would be prosperous and live for a century.

14.3.8 Predicting Age by Palmistry

Lord Vishnu, continuing with his narration told Shiva that the age of a person could be predicted by the lines found on his palms- ' If the life line reaches the base between index and middle fingers then the concerned person lives for a century. If the life line is long, clear and without intersections from other lines then the concerned person lives for a hundred years.

14.3.9 Prediction based on physical traits of women

Lord Vishnu said-'A woman having a round face, curly hair and lower portion of her navel slightly slanted towards right, is extremely fortunate not only for herself but also for her whole clan. Similarly, a woman with golden complexion and hands as beautiful and soft as red lotus flower is exceptionally chaste and

faithful towards her husband. A woman having dry and unruly hair and also round eyes becomes a widow.

A woman whose face is round like a full moon and which radiates like a rising Sun and whose lips are juicy like a 'Bael' fruit (Wood apple), enjoys a happy and contented life. A woman having a cobweb of lines on her palms is sure to lead a torturous and painful life whereas a palm with few lines indicates that she would be poor. If the lines are pink, then they indicate happiness, prosperity and good health whereas blackish lines indicate that she would live a life of slavery. Any woman having either a 'Chakra', a hook or a ear ring mark on her hand indicates that she would beget worthy sons and rule like a queen. A woman having hair around her breasts as well as a protruding lower lip spells doom for her husband. Any woman having a festoon mark on her palms indicates that she would get married in a family superior to her in status.

A woman having a round navel with brown hair around it leads a life of slavery despite being born in a royal family. A woman whose little toes as well as big toes of both the legs do not touch the ground while walking spells doom for her husband. In the same manner beautiful eyes indicate good fortune while soft and tender skin indicate a happy married life.

14.3.10 Various Names of 'Shaligram'

Describing how a Shaligram is named on the basis of number of Chakra present on it, Lord Vishnu said-' If there is only one Chakra on the Shaligram idol then it is called 'Sudarshan'. In the same way, Shaligram with two Chakras is known as 'Laxmi Narayan' while that having three Chakras on it is called 'Achyut'. Shaligram with four Chakra on it is known as 'Chaturbhuj', that with five Chakras 'Vasudev'. Similarly, Shaligram with six, seven, eight, ninth, tenth, eleven and twelve Chakras are called 'Pradyumana', 'Sankarshan', 'Purushottam', 'Navavyuha', 'Dashatmak', 'Aniruddha' and Dwi-Dashatmak respectively. Shaligrams with more than twelve Chakras are called infinite.

14.3.11 How Jewels Originated

Sutji, once narrated the following tale to the assembled sages which sheds light on the origin of jewels and other precious stones -

' During ancient times there lived a mighty demon named Bala. Although he had defeated the deities and driven them out from the heaven, yet he had assured them that he would extend fullest cooperation and support in any yagya performed by deities in future. All the deities planned to perform a 'Yagya' in order to regain their lost kingdom. They made all the necessary preparations for the Yagya but were unable to find a person who could offer himself as a 'sacrificial being'- a ritual without which any yagya is incomplete.'

'Seeing no other option, the worried deities took refuge of 'Balasur' and requested him to offer himself for sacrifice so that the yagya could be accomplished without any hitch. Balasur was bound by his promise so he

agreed. This way, the deities were able to accomplish their yagya. But, a strange event coincided with the death of Balasur, which surprised even the deities. The virtuous deed of offering himself as a sacrificial being in the yagya ceremony had amazingly transformed Balasur's corpse into jewels. Deities tried to carry the 'Jewel-body' through the aerial route towards a safer place, but it was fragmented into countless pieces due to the impact of ferocious speed of the wind it had to negotiate. These pieces scattered all over the places- ocean, rivers, Mountains, Forests, etc. In course of time these places got transformed into countless mines of jewels and precious stones such as Vajra (diamond), Muktamani, Indraneel, Sphatik, Prawal, Pushparag and many more.

14.4 Prominent Places of Pilgrimage

This chapter contains 5 sections as follows:

Sutji, while giving the names of some prominent places of pilgrimage told the assembled sages-'The banks of Ganga are considered to be the holiest among all the places of pilgrimage. The holy Ganga, which originates from the Himalayas in the north, ultimately gets merged with the ocean in the east. During her entire course of flow, she passes through numerous holy places, which owe their holiness mainly to her. Although, any place situated on the banks of Ganga is considered holy, yet Prayag, Haridwar, Varanasi and Ganga sangam (The place where she meets the ocean) have special significance and there is no other place as holy as each of them. Prayag is believed to fulfil both the wishes, which a man aspires for- worldly enjoyments as well as salvation.

Performing the rituals of pinda daan here not only helps the ancestors to liberate but also himself. Varanasi is the same place where lord Shiva and Keshav have their respective abodes. Donating at Kurukshetra brings incomparable virtues and gives both worldly enjoyments as well as salvation. Kedar teerth is capable of liberating even a heinous sinner from all his sins. Few other places considered very holy are- Shwetdweepa, Naimisharanya, Pushkar, Ayodhya, Chitrakut, Gomti, Kanchipuri, Sri Shail, Kaam- teerth, Amarkantak, Ujjain, Mathura, Govardhan, etc. All these places have great religious significance and each of them is capable of liberating a man from all his sins.

14.4.1 The Significance of Gaya Teertha

Once, while narrating how Gaya, a prominent place of pilgrimage in eastern part of India got its name, Lord Brahma told sage Vyas-' During ancient times there lived a mighty demon named Gaya. He used to torment the deities, who ultimately went to seek the help of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu successfully killed Gayasur after a fierce mace-duel. The place where Gaya died became famous by his name. There is a grand Vishnu temple situated at Gaya where there is a magnificent idol of Lord 'Gadhadhar' (Lord Vishnu holding a mace in his hand).

Gaya is considered to be the most ideal place of pilgrimage for performing the shraddh rituals. It is believed that a person goes to hell if he dies in the following circumstances- if he dies without his consecrations being performed,

or if a wild animal kills him, or if he meets an accidental death no matter what the reasons are. But, if 'Shraddh rituals' are performed at 'Gaya' then the soul of such a man gets rid of the tortures of the hell and goes to heaven.

The importance of performing 'Shraddh rituals' over there can be gauged by the fact that a person becomes liberated from 'pitra rina' (debts towards one's father) once he touches the sacrosanct soil of 'Gaya'. The reason being that Lord Vishnu himself dwells there in the form of 'Pitra devata' and by having his divine glimpse a man is freed of all his three debts. The entire area stretching from the foothills of Vishnu mountain to 'Uttar Manas' is considered extremely holy and this is the same area where river Falgu flows. Offering 'Pinda daan' to ancestors at this place helps them to attain salvation. While performing the rituals of 'Pinda daan' he should chant the following matra-

'ESHA PINDO MAYA DASTRATAV HASTE JANARDANAH;
PARLOKAM GATE MOKSHAM KSHAYMU PATISHTHATAAM.

There are many other places as holy as the banks of Falgu and performance of 'Shraddh rituals' over there give undiminished virtues to the ancestors - Dharma-Prishtha, Brahmasar, Gayashirsha, Akshay-Teerth, Dhenukaranya are few such places capable of liberating twenty generations of a man. The entire city of 'Gaya' is considered sacrosanct and performing the rituals of 'Shraddh' or offering Pinda daan to ancestors at any place within 'Gaya' helps the soul of the ancestors to attain to Brahmaloka.

14.4.2 The Rituals of Pindadaan

Before setting out for Gaya to offer Pinda daan, a man should appropriately perform 'Shraddh rituals' in the village or town he lives. Each step taken towards Gaya acts as a stepping stone to the heaven for the ancestors. Getting one's head tonsured or observing fast is prohibited in some places of pilgrimage like Badrinath, Kurukshetra, Jagannathpuri and Gaya. There is no time restriction on the performance of Shraddh rituals at Gaya and they can be performed anytime.

After reaching Gaya, a man should first of all invoke his ancestors while taking bath in the holy Falgu and offer pinda daan to them. He should then visit the temple of Lord Gadadhar(Vishnu) and worship the deity. The next day, he should once again perform the Shraddh rituals at Dharmaranya and Matangwapi, two sacrosanct places having great religious significance. On the third day, he should perform the rituals of 'Tarpan' on the banks of 'Brahmasada teerth' and then go to 'Koop-teerth' and 'Yoop-teerth' to repeat the performance of Shraddh rituals.

He should then feed the Brahmins at 'Goprachar teerth', an act considered to help ancestors attain salvation. On the fourth day he should take a holy dip in river Falgu and once again perform 'Shraddh rituals' at a place called 'Gayashirsh'. There are many more holy places in the vicinity where he is

required to perform Shraddh rituals'- Vyas, Dehimukh, Panchagni, Surya- teerth, Som-teerth and Kartikeya-teerth are few of them. Finally, on the fifth day, he should take a holy dip in 'Gada-lolak' teerth and offer 'Pinda-daan' under the Banyan tree called 'Akshay vat'- an act believed to liberate all his predecessors as well as coming generations from the bondage of Earth. After that Brahmins are fed. Feeding one Brahmin at Gaya brings the same virtues what one would get by feeding one crore Brahmins elsewhere.'

14.4.3 Tale of King Vishal

Lord Brahma then narrated a tale glorifying the significance of performing 'Shraddh rituals' at Gaya- ' O Vyas! Once upon a time there lived a trader who was sonless. One day, while he was on his pilgrimage, he met a restless ghost, who requested him to perform the rituals of Pinda daan at Gaya so that not only he became liberated from the pains and tortures of being a spirit but also he (Trader) went to heaven. The trader went to Gaya accompanied by his younger brother, as per the request of the Ghost and not only performed the rituals of 'Pinda-daan' for the ghost but also for his own ancestors.

As a result not only the ghost but all his ancestors became liberated. On account of his virtuous deeds, the trader was blessed with a son. He enjoyed a long life full of joy and contentment. After his death he was reborn as Vishal, in the princely state of Vishala. After growing up he got married but even after a long time he did not beget a son and this made him very sad. One day he asked the royal priests about the reason he did not beget a son. All the priests advised him to offer Pinda daan at Gaya as they felt that by doing so the king would definitely get blessed with a son and they were not wrong, as Vishal indeed was blessed with a son after he had offered Pinda daan at Gaya.'

One day while Vishal was having a walk in the royal garden he was amazed to see three entities descending down from the sky. After all three of them had landed on the ground, Vishal had a close look at them. One of them was fair while the second one's complexion was reddish. The third and the most ferocious among them was of dark complexion. For a moment Vishal was dumbstruck by this mysterious sight but it did not take him long to gather his composure. He asked them as to who they were and was stunned by the answers he got.

Actually, these three entities were none other than the souls of his Father, Grand Father and Great Grand Father, all of whom had died long ago. They had come to thank Vishal, who by performing the rituals of Shraddh had helped them in getting liberated from all their sins. The entity appearing fair, who in fact was Vishal's father said- Thank you for helping me attain to Indra loka. If it were not for you, I would have still been languishing in hell. The entity with reddish complexion is your Grand Father, who had committed grave sins while he was alive and as the consequences he went to the most ferocious hell named Avichi after his death. Even he has been liberated because of you. The third entity among us and having dark complexion is your Great Grand Father.

He had committed heinous of sins while he was alive but even he has become liberated because of you. We have come to express our gratitude and to thank you for having liberated us from our miserable conditions. All three of us are now departing for heaven.'

Having said this all three of them disappeared in a moment. Vishal was extremely satisfied that he had been successful in fulfilling one of the major obligations towards his ancestors (pitra-rina) by helping them attain to heaven. He enjoyed a long life and after his death he too went to heaven.

14.4.4 Prajapati Ruchi's Disenchantment

Once, Sutji recounted the following tale to the assembled sages, which had been originally told by sage Markandeya to Kraunchki long ago- 'Once, sage Ruchi became so disenchanted with the world that he decided to remain a bachelor, a decision which made his 'Pitras'(ancestors) extremely worried. They tried to change his mind by citing numerous benefits of householder's life and the yeomen service he does to the society.

They said- O Ruchi! The decision you have taken is most unfortunate. Perhaps you are not aware of the importance a 'Grihasta' holds in the society. But for his cooperation, not a single religious activity can take place. It's your misconception that a 'Grihasta' can not attain salvation. On the contrary, he has numerous opportunities in his life to attain salvation. Different rituals and consecrations enable him to achieve this important goal of a man's life.' Pitras' advises had great impact on Prajapati Ruchi and he agreed to get married.'

Thereafter a search for an ideal match began but even after best of his efforts he did not get any. Prajapati Ruchi then decided to please Lord Brahma by his austere penance. He commenced his penance, which continued for a very long period. Finally, Lord Brahma appeared and advised him to please his 'Pitras'. Acting on the advice of Lord Brahma, Prajapati Ruchi eulogized his ancestors and performed the rituals of 'Tarpan' to pacify their souls. All his 'Pitras' appeared and blessed him.

14.4.5 Prajapati Ruchi marries Manini

The blessings given by 'Pitras' fructified instantaneously as a beautiful 'Apsara' manifested herself from the river flowing nearby and said-' O great sage! I am Pramlocha. I would consider it as my good fortune if you give your consent to marry my daughter- Manini. Pushkar- son of Varun is her father. In course of time a son named 'Rauchya' will be born to you.'

This was the day Prajapati Ruchi was eagerly waiting for. He decided to get married then and there so he invited all the prominent sages and the marriage ceremony was solemnized in their presence. In course of time, a son named 'Rauchya' was born to them. He was a great sage after whom a Manvantar was named.

14.5 Description of Various Consecrations

This chapter contains 6 sections as follows:

While describing the significance of various consecrations, Lord Vishnu told Shiva that the union of man's sperm and woman's ovum results into the birth of a child. This union along with the whole process of foetus getting transformed into a baby is a lengthy affair during which it imbibes numerous impurities. Consecrations purify a man from all these impurities. Lord Vishnu said -' The mankind has been categorized into four prominent castes- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The former three castes are also known as 'Dwijas' (Twice born. The solemnization of a consecration named Yagyopavit is believed to be their second birth.) because only they are entitled to get consecrated into this particular ceremony. Right from his birth till he takes his last breath, a 'Dwija' has to undergo various consecrations.'

Giving the names of some prominent consecration ceremonies that a Dwija has to go through, Lord Vishnu said-

' Garbhadhan Sanskar is performed at the time of conception. The scriptures have clearly stated about the best time for a woman to conceive- twelve days after her menstruation has started, beginning from the fifth day as the first four days are not considered auspicious for this purpose. 'Punsavan sanskar' is performed in the third month after conception while 'Seemantonayan sanskar' is performed in the sixth or eighth month after conception. After the birth of a child the consecration named 'Jaat karma' is performed while 'Naam karan sanskar' is performed on the eleventh day after his birth whereby the new born baby is given a name. 'Nishkraman sanskar' is performed in the fourth month and 'Annaprashan sanskar' in the sixth month. The consecration named 'Chudamani sanskar' can be performed either in the first, third or fifth year of the child.'

14.5.1 Upanayana Sanskara

Dwelling on length about the appropriate way of performing 'Upanayan sanskar' (Sacred thread ceremony) rituals, Lord Vishnu said-' A Brahmin child should get consecrated with the sacred thread in his eighth year while a Kshatriya child's consecration should be performed when he has attained the age of eleven. 'Upanayan sanskar' of a Vaishya child should be performed in his twelfth year.'

A dwija, whose 'Upanayan sanskar' has been performed, must face southwards while relieving himself in the night whereas during daytime he should face northward. Subsequently, he should purify himself by properly washing his urinary organ with mud (soap) and water. He should also wash his hands and feet. The purification is believed to be incomplete until and unless the rituals of 'Aachman' (ritualistic rinsing of the mouth) have been performed. Next morning, after having a bath, he should do 'Pranayam' and chant the sacred Gayatri mantra facing east. In the evening he should chant Gayatri mantra facing south.

After this the ritual of 'Bhikshatan' is performed whereby he seeks alms and donates everything that he gets to his Guru as a mark of respect to him.

This particular ritual is symbolic and emphasizes the absolute necessity of subduing one's ego before acquiring knowledge from his Guru. A celibate is supposed to wear nothing but a Deer skin and a waist band made of long reeds on his person with a sacred thread hanging across his shoulder and carry a stick in his hand. The celibate whose Upanayan sanskar has been performed should stay at his Guru's hermitage till he completes his education. It is also his duty to collect food grains from the neighbourhood to meet the food requirement of all the people living in the hermitage. A Brahmin celibate should chant 'Bhavati bhiksham dehi' while seeking alms whereas a Kshatriya celibate should chant the same mantra with a slight modification ' Bhiksham bhavati dehi'. Similarly, a Vaishya celibate should chant 'Bhiksham dehi bhavati' while seeking alms.'

14.5.2 Keshant Sanskara

After finishing his education the celibate should shave his beards and moustaches for the first time. Strict guidelines have been laid down for each caste with respect to this particular consecration. A Brahmin should get consecrated with this ritual in his sixteenth year while a Kshatriya should get it performed in his twenty- second year. Similarly, a Vaishya should get consecrated with this ritual in his twenty-fourth year. The above mentioned age limits are also the maximum before which respective castes are supposed to get consecrated with the sacred thread ceremony failing which he becomes a religious outcaste.

14.5.3 Grihasta Ashrama

His education being complete now it is the time for him to enter the life of a householder. But, before leaving the hermitage he should pay 'Dakshina' as a mark of gratitude to his Guru for all the knowledge he has imparted to him. With the permission of his Guru, he should then marry a girl who is beautiful, younger to him and belonging to different 'Gotra'. Although the best option for him is to marry a woman belonging to his own caste, but he is allowed to marry outside his caste, provided the woman hails from a caste inferior to him but under no circumstances he should marry a woman belonging to superior caste.

14.5.4 Copulation Prohibited on Certain Days

An ideal wife is one who obeys the commands of her husband without any inhibition. According to the scriptures the best time for a married couple to copulate is after the woman has had her menstruation, especially till sixteen days after her periods have commenced are considered best for this purpose. But, there are also certain days on which making sexual contacts is prohibited- the first four days after her periods have started, Ashtami, Chaturdashi, Amavasya and Purnima are few such days. If the above given rules are followed then a couple can beget worthy sons possessing good qualities. Considering the fact that a woman has sexual urge eight times more than a man, scriptures

have also advised a man not to overlook the sexual urge of his wife and to satisfy her without bothering about the prohibited days.

14.5.5 Purification of Different Articles

Describing the methods of purifying different articles, Lord Vishnu reflected on the instructions which sage Yagyavalkya had once given to other sages in this regard-' Substances like gold, silver, conch, vegetables, rope, leather articles, etc. become pure once they are washed with water. In the same way, utensils made of wood or animal's horn become pure after they have been chiseled. Utensils used in yagya become pure after they have been rubbed with mud and then washed with water. Washing woolen and silken clothes with tepid water or cow-urine make them pure.

Land is purified if it is coated with cow-dung. Copper vessels, articles made of lead and Tin vessels become pure if cleaned with a solution of alkali, acid and then washed with water. Iron and Bronze vessels become pure if cleaned with ash and water. The followings are believed to be pure- sun-light, fire, cow, horse, earth, air, dew-drops, food-grains up for sale in the market, etc. A man should perform Aachaman in the following circumstances- after his bath, after drinking water, after sneezing, after waking up from sleep, after having food, after having a walk on dusty path, after changing clothes, etc.

14.5.6 Brief Description of Shraadh Rituals

Describing the proper way of performing Shraddh rituals, sage Yagyavalkya told the assembled sages-' A performer of Shraddh rituals should invite able Brahmins and offer them seats of Kusha grass. First of all an invocation is made to 'Vishvedeva' by chanting a mantra in his praise, an action which is followed by scattering grains of barley in the vessels kept in front of the Deity's idol. Subsequently, some water and a small quantity of barley is taken in a small vessel, which is then handed over to the Brahmins along with other articles such as ghee lamp, garland, incense, etc. There are specific mantras for this particular ritual. After that he should offer seats of Kusha grass to all his ancestors one by one beginning from the left hand side and subsequently moving on to the right hand side. All the ancestors are then invoked with specific mantras.

The scriptures allow the use of sesame seeds in place of barley if latter is unavailable due to some reason. These sesame seeds should be kept in a 'Ardhya patra' and placed to the left side of each 'Pitras' (ancestors) in an inverted position. While performing 'havan' he should make offerings of 'ghee' and other articles in the 'havan kunda'. Finally, Brahmins are fed after which the performer of Shraddh rituals offers Pindadaan in the name of his ancestors. After that he helps all the Brahmins perform 'Aachaman' and gives donations to them. The idol of Vishvedeva is immersed in a nearby river or pond and the inverted pots are kept back in the normal position. Finally, all the Brahmins are seen off with respect. Shraddh rituals performed in the above mentioned way immensely satisfy the ancestors and help them attain to heaven.

14.6Karma and its consequences – Karma Vipak

This chapter contains 1 section as follows:

Continuing with his discourses, sage Yagvalkya told the assembled sages that an enlightened soul is aware of the fact that the mortal world being impermanent in nature has its beginning as well as its end. He is also aware that a man reaps the fruits of his evil deeds in the form of 'Adhidaivik'(heavenly wrath), 'Adhyatmik'(obstacles in spiritual development) and 'Adhibhautik' (worldly problems like diseases, poverty, etc.) That is why he endeavours to follow the path of virtuosity so that he can attain salvation-the ultimate objective of man's life.

Anybody engaged in sinful deeds is definite to go to hell whereas virtuous deeds help a man to attain to heaven. After tasting the fruits of his actions he once again has to take birth to realize the unfulfilled wishes of his previous birth. This cycle of transmigration is an endless process, leading to countless births and deaths of a man. He experiences unbearable pains in his mother's wombs lying in an inverted position for nine months.

Once again he has to go through the same dreadful experiences of youth, old age, diseases and death. A sinner, after tasting the fruits of his actions in the heaven or hell, depending on his virtuous or sinful deeds takes re-birth on the basis of the gravity of sins committed. Killing a Brahmin is believed to be the most heinous of sin and the person who has committed such a sin after having suffered the tortures of hell takes re-birth as a donkey or a dog.

In the same way a person who has stolen gold takes re-birth as lowly creatures such as worms or insects. A drunkard takes re-birth as a frog and a person developing illicit relationship with his teacher's wife takes re-birth as grass or hay. One who shows disrespect to his parents is reborn as a tortoise whereas anybody who wishes ill of his friends is reborn as a donkey.

14.6.1 Atoning for Sins

While describing various means by which a sinner can atone for his sins, sage Yagyavalkya said-' A man is certain to meet downfall and degradation in the following three conditions- if he goes against the instructions given in the scriptures, indulges in prohibited activities and runs after sensual pleasures. Atoning for one's sin is the best means of getting liberated from his sin as well as guilt. A sinner who does not atone for his sin goes through unbearable tortures and pains in hells more horrible than in 'Maharaurav' (name of a hell).

Very severe punishment has been recommended for a person, who has breached the modesty of a woman especially if she happens to be his friend's wife, teacher's wife, his own daughter or sister-in-law, etc. Scriptures are of the opinion that such a sinner should be killed without showing any mercy. If the woman is a willing partner in this ghastly crime then even she should be meted out the same punishment.

A person who has killed a Brahmin should atone for his sin by seeking alms for twelve years carrying a skull as his begging bowl. He should sustain himself on whatever he receives as alms. Protecting a cow's life also helps a man from getting liberated from the sin of 'Brahma-hatya'. A drunkard should atone for his sin by consuming any of the following- boiling liquor, ghee, cow-milk or cow-urine. A person accused of stealing gold can become liberated from his sin by donating gold equivalent to his own weight. A person who has killed a cow can become liberated from his sin by consuming 'Panchgavya'(a mixture of cow-milk, cow-dung, cow-urine, ghee and curd) and leading the rest of his life in the servitude of cows.

14.7 Different Kind of Austerities

This chapter contains 15 sections as follows:

Describing the various types of austerities, Lord Vishnu named few of them-

14.7.1 Yama (Restraining Passion)

This particular austerity comprises of ten virtues- Celibacy, Forgiveness, Meditation, Truthfulness, Honesty, Non-violence, Not stealing, Gentleness and Self control.

14.7.2 Niyama (Daily Routine)

This austerity stresses the importance of purity: both of the body as well as of the mind. It comprises of the following activities: bathing daily, contemplation, observing fast, performing oblations, self study, abstinence, penance, avoiding anger, being respectful towards teacher and purity.

14.7.3 Mahasantapana Vrata

This particular austerity comprises of specific rituals related with the usage of 'Panchagavya'(a mixture of cow milk, curd, ghee, cow urine and cow dung). On the first day of the austerity a devotee should have only milk, on the second day curd, on the third day 'ghee', on the fourth day 'gomutra'(cow urine), on the fifth day 'gomaya' (cow dung), on the sixth day he should live only on 'kushodak'(drinking water from a vessel in which 'kusha' grass have been kept) and on the last day of the austerity he should observe complete fast.

14.7.4 Parna Krichchha Vrata

Separate solutions of 'Palash'(Butea frondosa), 'Gular'(Ficus glomerata), 'Kamal'(lotus) and 'Bael' tree (wood apple) are prepared after boiling the leaves of respective vegetation mentioned above. On the first day of the austerity a devotee should have only 'Palash' solution while on the second day he should have 'Gular' solution. On the third day he should have 'Kamal' solution while on the fourth day he should live only on 'Bael' solution. On the fifth day of the austerity he should live only on 'Kusha' grass solution and nothing else. This is the manner in which the austerity of 'Parnakrichchha vrata' is observed.

14.7.5 Tapta Krichchha Vrata

A person observing this austerity should begin by having hot milk on the first day followed by tepid ghee and lukewarm water on the second and third day respectively. He should observe a complete fast on the fourth day.

14.7.6 Paad Krichchha Vrata

This particular austerity lasts for four days. On the first day a devotee should observe 'Ekabhakta vrata'(having food only once a day in the noon). On the second day he should observe 'Nakta' vrata(having food only once a day in the night). On the third day he should break his fast by having whatever is available with him because anything that has been provided by others is strictly prohibited. He should observe a total fast on the fourth day. When a devotee observes these cycles of austerity for three times then it is called 'Prajapatya krichchhra vrata'.

14.7.7 Ati Krichchha Vrata

Rituals of this austerity is more or less similar to that of Prajapatya krichchhra vrata with a slight difference- here fast is broken with a handful of cooked food. When this particular ritual is observed for four days then it is called Atikrichchha vrata.

14.7.8 Krichchha Atikrichha Vrata

Observing the rituals of Atikrichchha vrata for twenty-one days living only on milk and water is called Krichchhakrichha vrata.

14.7.9 Parak Vrata

Observing complete fast for twelve continuous days is called Parak vrata.

14.7.10 Chandrayana Vrata

It's an important austerity lasting for a month which commences on First day of the bright half of a month by observing fast for the whole day and breaking it in the night with one morsel of food. On the next day, i.e. 'dwitiya' one morsel of food is increased which means that instead of one morsel of food now two morsels are taken. This way one morsel of food is increased on each of the following days till the fourteenth day (chaturdashi) when the fast is broken by having fourteen morsels of food. A total fast is observed on 'Amavasya' (dark moon). On the next day i.e. first day of the dark half of the month one morsel is decreased which means that the devotee should break his fast with thirteen morsels of food. This way one morsel is decreased on each successive day till 'chaturdashi' when a devotee breaks his fast by having only one morsel of food. This is the way, how a Chandrayan vrata should be observed.

14.7.11 Anang Trayodashi Vrata

This austerity is related with the worship of Lord Shiva and commences on the thirteenth day of the bright half of the Hindu month Margashirsh and lasts for a year. It concludes exactly after a year when 'Rati' and 'Anang' are worshipped with appropriate rituals. Ten thousand offerings are made in the sacrificial fire.

Brahmins are fed and donations made to them. One who observes this austerity is blessed with health, wealth and good fortune.

14.7.12 Akhand Dvadashi Vrata

This austerity is related with the worship of Lord Vishnu. It commences on the twelfth day of the bright half of the Hindu month Margashirsh and lasts for a year consisting of three phases. One important characteristic of this austerity is that after four months, which is the first phase of the austerity, five vessels filled with food-grains are donated to Brahmins. In the second phase of the austerity consisting of four months and commencing from the Hindu month Chaitra, pots filled with parched grams are donated to Brahmins. Similarly, in the third and final phase of the austerity pots filled with ghee are donated to Brahmins.

14.7.13 Shiva Ratri Vrata

This austerity is related with the worship of Lord Shiva and a fast is observed on the fourteenth day of the dark half of the Hindu month Falgun. A devotee should observe fast in the night and worship Lord Shiva by chanting 'Om Namah Shivay'. He should perform 'havan' with black sesame seeds and worship Lord Shiva at midnight, in the third and the fourth 'prahar'(one prahar equals three hour) with appropriate rituals. One who observes fast on this day gets all his wishes fulfilled and attains salvation as well. A devotee who observes Shiva Ratri fast for twelve successive years acquires knowledge, wealth, success and happiness. Such a man also attains to Shiva loka after his death.

14.7.14 Virtues of Observing Fast on Shiva Ratri Night

During ancient times there lived a hunter named Sundarsen in the province of Arbuda. One day, he went deep into the forest in search of his prey but unfortunately he found none. He wandered all over the place but in vain. When evening came, he climbed up a wood apple (Bael) tree to protect himself from the wild animals. Sundarsen was worried that his family would have nothing to eat that night. Engrossed in his contemplative mood, he kept on plucking leaves from the 'Bael' tree and throwing them down. There was a Shiva linga just under the tree and the leaves, which Sundarsen threw, fell down on it.

Next morning while Sundarsen was climbing down the tree, his arrow fell down. While picking up his arrow, he touched the Shiva linga. Sundarsen was unaware of the fact that it was Shivaratri night and he had worshiped Lord Shiva with appropriate rituals albeit inadvertently-he had offered Bilva patra to Lord Shiva and had touched the Shiva linga. He attained to Shiva loka on account of the virtues attained by his inadvertent worship of Lord Shiva.

14.7.15 The Power of Chastity

Once, sage Vyas went to Brahmaloka to get his doubts cleared on certain spiritual matters from Lord Brahma. While dwelling on a wide range of religious topics such as importance of austerities and various incarnations Lord Vishnu took to protect righteousness, Lord Brahma narrated a tale of a Brahmin woman who possessed divine powers on account of her chastity. Lord Brahma

said-

' During ancient times there lived a Brahmin named Kaushik in Pratishthanpur Nagar. He was inflicted with leprosy but still his wife was very chaste and faithful towards him. His wife used to be on her toes attending to all his demands and looking after all his requirements. But still, he used to scold and abuse his wife at the first given opportunity without any rhyme or reason. However, his wife did not mind his behaviour understanding quite well the frustrations of a man suffering from dreaded disease like Leprosy.'

One day, something happened which made Kaushik extremely angry and in a fit of rage he made an impossible demand thinking that his wife would never comply by it giving him an opportunity to curse her to the satisfaction of his heart. Shouting angrily at his wife, Kaushik said- Age has started showing effect on you. You don't look beautiful as before. You have also started neglecting me. Take me to a beautiful prostitute so that I can satisfy my sexual urge.

Kaushik's wife was deeply hurt by his rude and unfair remarks but she remained cool and calm. Being a chaste and faithful wife she had no option but to obey her husband's command. So, she left for a prostitute's house carrying Kaushik on her shoulders.

The prostitute's house was far and it became dark while they were still on the way. Because of darkness, Kaushik's wife could not see sage Mandavya, who in spite of his innocence was given a severe punishment by the king- he had been made to sit on a pointed cone which after having penetrated through his body had pierced even his skull. But, being a great sage, Mandavya was engrossed in his meditation even in such a painful physical condition. Unfortunately, Kaushik's feet, which were hanging down the shoulders of his wife, touched Mandavya's body. Mandavya's meditation was disturbed and he came out from his meditative level. As a result he became conscious of his unbearable physical pain and cursed that whoever had disturbed his meditation would not live to see the next day.'

Kaushik died the next day but his wife, who had full confidence in her power of chastity, knew that her husband would be alive once again. She cursed angrily - ' Mandavya has a misconception about his power. He thinks that only he can control the natural phenomena but perhaps he does not know what feats a chaste woman is capable of performing. Its my command to the Sun not to rise from tomorrow onwards.'

And indeed, the Sun stopped rising from the next morning leading to catastrophic fallout. Everything went haywire in the world, which made the deities extremely worried. They came to me (Lord Brahma) with a request to reveal why Sun had stopped rising. I told them that it was all due to the curse of a chaste woman and then I narrated the whole story. I revealed to them that nobody except Sati Anusuya was capable of bringing back order in the world. I

advised them to seek the help of Sati Anusuya who was famous for her exceptional chastity. So, all the deities went to Sati Anusuya and requested her to make the Sun rise so that everything became orderly in the world once again. Sati Anusuya agreed to lend her help in bringing back normalcy in the world. She, by the virtue of her chastity not only made the Sun rise daily but also made dead Kaushik alive once again. Such is the power commanded by a woman practicing the austerity of chastity. There are numerous examples of such women famous for their chastity and Sita was one of them.

14.8The Tale of Ramayana

Lord Brahma then went on to describe the famous tale of Ramayana the mere listening to which absolves a man from all his sins. He began by giving the details of Sri Ram's lineage and said-' I (Lord Brahma) manifested from the Lotus originating from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Sage Marich manifested from me while Kashyap was Marich's son. Surya manifested from Kashyap, Vaivaswat-Manu from Surya and Ikshavaku was born to Vaivaswat-Manu. The great King Raghu was also the descendant of Ikshavaku. Raghu's son was Aja, whose son was Dasharath.

Dasharath had three queens-Kaushalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra. Kaushalya gave birth to Sri Ram while Kaikeyi was the mother of Bharat. Sumitra had two sons-Laxman and Shatrughan.

Sri Ram had great devotion towards his parents. Sage Vishwamitra, who was tormented by the demons, took Sri Ram and Laxman along with him so that he could do his penance peacefully. He assured Dashrath that he would make both his sons proficient in all the scriptures as well as in the usage of various weapons. With great reluctance, Dasharath allowed Sri Ram and Laxman to go along with Vishwamitra.

Once in the forest Sri Ram assured his Guru to do his penance without bothering about the demons. Vishwamitra commenced his penance and Sri Ram killed all the demons trying to disturb him. The names of few demons killed by Sri Ram were Tadaka, Subahu, etc.

Janak, the father of Sita had organized a grand 'Swayamvar' ceremony to which he had invited all the prominent kings of that time. He had also sent invitation to Vishwamitra. Vishwamitra set out for Janakpur accompanied by Sri Ram and Laxman.

Janak had a huge bow gifted to him by Lord Shiva and which he worshipped daily with appropriate ritual. Once during the process of cleaning the area where Shiva's bow was kept, Sita lifted the bow and kept it a distance. Later on she forgot to keep it back at the original place. When Janak came to worship the bow he was surprised to find it to be kept at a different place. He made an inquiry and Sita confessed that she had kept it while cleaning the place of worship. Janak just could not believe that his tender looking daughter

possessed such strength and power. No wonder he decided to give Sita's hand in marriage to such a man who could break Shiva's bow. So, he made a declaration that anybody capable of breaking Shiva's bow could have Sita as his wife.

There were many mighty warriors present at the 'Swayamvar' ceremony but none had the strength to even lift the bow what to say about breaking it. Finally, as the destiny would have liked it, Sri Ram broke the bow into three pieces and thus married Sita. Laxman married Urmila- another daughter of Dasharath while Bharat and Shatrughan married Mandavi and Keertimayi respectively, both daughters of King Kushadhwaja.

Later on, when Dasharath decided to crown Sri Ram as the King of Ayodhya, Kaikeyi played a spoilsport and demanded her son-Bharat to be made the King of Ayodhya and Sri Ram to be sent into exile for fourteen years. Actually, Kaikeyi had taken undue advantage of Dasharath's helpless condition to serve her own interest. Once, Dasharath was busy fighting a battle oblivious of the fact that one of the wheels of the chariot was about to eject from its axle as the nail supporting it had fallen off. Kaikeyi, who was also accompanying him, saved his life by preventing the wheel from falling off and thus maintaining the balance of the chariot. When Dasharath learnt how Kaikeyi had saved his life he promised to grant her two boons. At that time Kaikeyi did not ask for any thing and merely said that she would demand at the appropriate time. So, when the time for Ram's coronation came she thought it was the best opportunity for her to remind Dasharath about the two boons he had promised to grant her.

Dasharath, bound by his deep love for Sri Ram on the one hand and by his vow on the other, agreed to Kaikeyi's demand with a heavy heart. Sri Ram without any hesitation followed his father's order and left for the forest. How could have Sita and Laxman lived without him? So, they too accompanied him to the forest. In course of his journey, Sri Ram passed by many holy places and finally after reaching Chitrakoot he made a 'Parna kuti' (hermitage made of leaves) and started living there.

The shock caused by Sri Ram's separation proved to be fatal for Dasharath, who died with an unfulfilled desire of having a glimpse of his dearest son. Bharat, who at that time was at his maternal uncle's place, returned to Ayodhya after hearing the news of his father's demise and performed his last rites. He then went to Chitrakoot and tried his level best to convince Sri Ram into returning back to Ayodhya. But, Sri Ram did not agree, as it was against his principle to disobey the commands of his father. Sri Ram gave his pair of wooden sandals to Bharat as a token of love and requested him to return to Ayodhya. Bharat returned to Ayodhya and kept Sri Ram's sandals on the throne. He then stationed himself at Nandigram- a city situated at the outskirts of Ayodhya and started ruling from there on behalf of his elder brother. He had vowed not to return to Ayodhya till the completion of Sri Ram's period of exile.

From Chitrakoot, Sri Ram reached Dandakaranya accompanied by Sita and Laxman and started living in a hermitage made of leaves. There they also met prominent sages like Atri and Agastya. Once an ogress named 'Surpanakha' (Ravan's sister) attacked Sri Ram but Laxman retaliated by severing both her ears as well as her nose. Surpanakha, badly injured and bleeding profusely, went to Khardushan and narrated her woeful tale. Khardushan attacked Sri Ram with a huge army consisting of fourteen thousand soldiers but lost all his men in the battle.

The revengeful Ravan went to the hermitage disguised as a hermit and abducted Sita while Sri Ram was away in pursuit of Marich-the golden deer. Actually, Marich was a demon, who had disguised himself as a golden deer on the instruction of Ravan so that Sita could be abducted successfully. Ravan knew quite well that it was impossible for him to abduct Sita in the presence of Sri Ram. So, he hatched a plan according to which Marich was to disguise himself as a golden deer and enchant Sita. Ravan was sure that Sita after being enchanted by the beauty of the golden Deer would ask her husband to get it at any cost. Everything happened as per the plan of Ravan and he was successful in abducting Sita.

When Sri Ram did not find Sita in the hermitage he became worried and started searching for her frantically. On the way he met old Jatayu, who had got injured while trying to resist Ravan from taking away Sita. Jatayu informed him that Ravan had taken Sita towards south. Jatayu was so badly injured that he died soon after giving Sita's information to Sri Ram. Sri Ram performed his last rites and continued with his search. He proceeded towards south as per the instructions of Jatayu and reached 'Rishyamook' mountain where he met Sugreeva, whom he befriended. He killed Bali, who harboured enemity against his brother- Sugreeva. He then made Sugreeva the King of 'Kishkindha' and himself went to live at 'Rishyamook' mountain.

Sugreeva sent monkeys in all directions to find out Sita's whereabouts. Hanuman went towards south and with the help of Sampati managed to find out the exact location where Ravan had kept Sita. Hanuman took a giant leap and the next moment he found himself on the other side of the ocean. He went to 'Ashok- Vatika' where Ravan had kept Sita in captivity. He presented the ring to her, which Sri Ram had given him. Sita, in turn gave her 'Chudamani'(ornament) and requested him to give it to Sri Ram. Jumping from one branch to another, hungry Hanuman ate all the fruits and in the process destroyed the beautiful garden. When Ravan came to know about the destruction caused in the beautiful garden of 'Ashok Vatika', he sent many demons to capture Hanuman. But, all of them were killed including Akshay Kumar, Ravan's son. Ultimately, Hanuman was made captive by Meghanad and produced before Ravan, who ordered his tail to be set ablaze as a punishment. Hanuman, with his tail ablaze, jumped from one palace to another and burnt the golden city of Lanka within no time. He then returned to his master Sri Ram and described everything in detail.

Finally, Sri Ram attacked Lanka with a huge army comprising of mighty warriors like Hanuman, Sugreeva, Angad and many others. A fierce battle took place in which all the demons including Ravan were killed. The victorious Sri Ram returned to Ayodhya along with his consort Sita. The residents of Ayodhya danced in joy at the return of their prodigious son. Sri Ram ruled over Ayodhya for eleven thousand years. Finally he ascended to the heaven taking along all the people of Ayodhya with him but before doing that he appointed Lav and Kush-his Sons, as his successors.

14.9Sri Krshna

Making a revelation to Vyas that the Almighty God manifests himself whenever the civilization is endangered by the dominance of sinners, Lord Brahma said- 'In Dwapar yuga, Lord Vishnu incarnated as Sri Krishna to protect Dharma from being subjugated by 'Adharma', which had become all pervasive at that time. He was born to Vasudev and Devaki. Both his parents had been kept under captivity by Kansa, who was aware of the prophesy that he would be killed by Devaki's eighth son. In due course of time Devaki gave birth to seven sons all of whom were mercilessly killed by Kansa one by one. In order to protect the life of Sri Krishna- the eighth child born to Devaki, Vasudev exchanged him with the baby girl born to Yashoda and Nand. Vasudev had no problem in moving out of the prison as Krishna by his divine power induced all the guards to sleep.

Sri Krishna, being an incarnation of Lord Vishnu performed great feats right from his childhood. Once, Kansa sent an ogress named Putna, who tried to kill Sri Krishna by breast-feeding him. But, Krishna sucked her breasts with such ferocity that Putna met an instant death. In due course of time Sri Krishna killed many more ferocious demons like Shakatasur, Kaliya Nag, Dhenukasur and mesmerized the residents of Gokul by his divine bravery. He also performed many other divine feats like lifting Govardhan mountain and performing Raas-Lila with the Gopis. Seeing all his plans of killing Sri Krishna go in vain, Kansa sent him a message challenging for a 'duel- bought' with his court-wrestlers named 'Mushtik' and 'Chanur'. Sri Krishna killed both the dreaded demons without much difficulty. Ultimately, Sri Krishna climbed up the throne sitting on which Ravan had been watching the wrestling bout and pulled him down by his hair. He then punched Kansa on his chest so hard that he died an instantaneous death.

Having accomplished his most important mission of killing the demon king-Kansa and liberating the earth from his tyranny, Sri Krishna went on to complete his education under the tutelage of Sage Sandipani. During ancient times it was customary for a disciple to offer Dakshina to his teacher, as a mark of respect after his education was complete. Sri Krishna following this tradition gave an invaluable Dakshina to his Guru by bringing all his dead sons alive to earth from 'Yamloka'.

Sri Krishna was subsequently crowned as the king of Mathura but on account of the relentless attack by Jarasandha he had to abandon his dear city and shift his base to Dwarka. He had eight queens among whom Rukmini and Satyabhama were prominent. Later on he rescued sixteen thousand and one hundred women from the captivity of Narakasur and married all of them. From Rukmini he had a son named Pradyumna, who killed Shambarasur. Aniruddha was Pradyumna's son and he married Usha- daughter of Banasur. Banasur was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and was blessed with one thousand hands.

Lord Shiva came to his rescue at the time when he was battling against the might of Sri Krishna. A fierce battle was fought between both the deities, which remained inconclusive even after a long time. Lord Shiva then requested Sri Krishna to spare Banasur's life to which he agreed albeit partially. Sri Krishna severed all the hands of Banasur barring two. Finally, after accomplishing his mission of liberating the earth from the darkness of sin Sri Krishna left for heavenly abode.

14.10 The Tale of Mahabharat

Giving the reasons that lead to the great battle of Mahabharat, Lord Brahma told sage Vyas that Sri Krishna had planned this great battle and executed it to perfection to relieve the earth from the burden of tyrants. While giving the names of lineal ascendants of Kauravas and Pandavas, he said-' I (Lord Brahma) manifested from the lotus which itself had its origin in the navel of Vishnu. Atri manifested from me while Chandra from Atri. Buddh was born to Chandra while he himself was the father of Pururava. Aayu was Pururava's son while he himself was the son of Yayati.

The names of few famous descendants of Yayati were Bharat, Kuru and Shantanu. Shantanu had two wives- Ganga and Satyavati. The former was the mother of Bhishma, the indomitable warrior, who had vowed to remain a bachelor throughout his life. The latter i.e. Satyavati gave birth to two sons- Chitrangad and Vichitraveerya. A Gandharva killed Chitrangad while Vichitraveerya died issue-less despite having two wives- Ambika and Ambalika(both daughters of the king of Kashi). In order to expand their clan both Ambika and Ambalika begot one son each from sage Vyas. Ambika gave birth to Dhritrashtra while Ambalika to Pandu. The same Vyas also had a son from a maid servant who became famous as Vidur and who was famous for his statesmanship and tactfulness.

Dhritrashtra married Gandhari and begot one hundred sons from her among whom Duryodhan was most notorious. These one hundred sons of Dhritrashtra became famous as Kauravas. Pandu had two wives Kunti and Madri from whom he begot five sons-Yudhishthir, Bhima, Arjun, Nakul and Sahdev, who all grew up to be very powerful and mighty. All five of them became famous as Pandavas. Pandu, their father had died while they were still young and Madri, unable to bear the sorrow had given up her life by jumping into the burning pyre

of her dead husband. So, the Pandavas were brought up under the guardianship of Kunti.

Kauravas and Pandavas were bitter rivals right from their childhood. Duryodhan never missed a chance to torment the Pandavas- his cousins. Both Kauravas and Pandavas were brought up under the tutelage of Kripacharya and Dronacharya, both prominent scholars of their times. Once, Duryodhan tried to kill Bhima by poisoning him but fortunately Bhima not only came out unscathed but also with renewed strength and vigour. Duryodhan tried his luck for the second time to eliminate his enemies by setting ablaze the house of wax in which Pandavas were living but once again they came out unharmed. Pandavas then went to 'Ekchakra Nagar' and took refuge in the house of a Brahmin family. A demon named 'Baka' used to torment the people of Ekchakra Nagar. Bhima killed that demon and the people were relieved at the news of their tormentor's death. Thereafter Pandavas went to attend the Swayamvar ceremony of Draupadi. Arjun won Draupadi as his wife by piercing the eye of the fish hanged above his head by looking at its image in the water-pot kept below.

At the insistence of Dronacharya and Bhishma, Yudhishthir reluctantly agreed to share half of his Kingdom with the Pandavas. Thus Pandavas started living at Indraprashth, the capital of their newly acquired Kingdom.

Arjuna married Subhadra, his second wife and the sister of Sri Krishna. He pleased Agni Dev by his austere penance and received divine weapons like- a divine chariot, Gandiv (bow), imperishable arrows and an impenetrable shield. After being armed with these divine weapons he successfully defeated many powerful monarchies and gave the whole acquired wealth to Yudhishthir, his elder brother.

Dhrithrashtra invited Yudhishthir for a game of 'Dyuta' (gamble) but Duryodhan defeated him by employing unfair and deceitful tactics with the active connivance of Shakuni- his cunning maternal uncle. Yudhishthir lost everything in the gamble- his whole wealth, his kingdom and even Draupadi. Pandavas had to go into exile for twelve years with an additional year of 'Agyatwas'(they were not supposed to be recognized during this period) as per the terms and conditions laid down for the game.

After completing their total period of exile, Pandavas reached Virat Nagar to spend their year of 'Agyatwas', which posed more dangers and challenges because if they were recognized during this period it would have meant another twelve years of exile for them.

Having successfully completed their period of exile, Pandavas demanded back their Kingdom but Duryodhan was not even willing to part away with five villages. Thus Pandavas were left with no option but to fight for their legitimate rights. Both the rival armies boasted of mighty and brave warriors on their sides.

Duryodhan appointed Bhishma as the chief commander of his army whereas Shikhandi was leading Pandava's army. The first ten days of the battle saw a fierce fight between both the rival armies during which period many warriors from each side achieved martyrdom. Finally, while Bhishma lay down injured, his whole body pierced with Arjuna's arrows, but still alive because he had received a boon of 'Iccha Mrityu'(death by his choice) prominent warriors from both sides stood around him. It was only after the Sun came north of equinox (Uttarayan), the auspicious time Bhishma had chosen to leave his mortal body that he died after preaching the Pandavas on wide range of subjects.

After Bhishma's death Dronacharya led the Kaurava's army. This was the most crucial phase of the battle. Dronacharya had become so demoralized after his son's death, that he had just no motivation left in him to fight the battle. Finding an opportune moment, Dhrishtadyumna severed his head and Kauravas thus lost their most able and experienced commander.

Duryodhan appointed Karna as the next commander of Kaurava's army. The most decisive phase of the battle began and after a fierce battle of two days Arjuna managed to kill his brave rival. Subsequently, Yudhishthir killed Shalya.

After loosing all his mighty warriors, Duryodhana, in a fit of rage challenged Bhima for a duel of mace. Bhima killed him after a fierce fight. The revengeful Ashwatthama, son of Dronacharya, attacked the Pandava's camp at night, much against the norms of battle and killed all the five sons of Draupadi and thousand of other Pandava soldiers. Arjuna avenged the death of his sons by defeating Ashwatthama and extracting the diamond set in his forehead.

After the battle ended, Yudhishthir performed the rituals of Shraddh in the name of all the dead warriors and ascended the throne. He ruled in a just manner just according to the instructions given by Bhishma. After Sri Krishna left this mortal world, Yudhishthir appointed Parikshit as his successor and left for Himalaya accompanied by his brothers as well as Draupadi.

14.11 The Eternal Truth

This chapter contains 2 sections as follows:

Lord Brahma, while shedding light on various aspects of religion told sage Vyas that a man should look at his sorrows (shoka) with a sense of aloofness and detachment, considering it as a passing phase. He also revealed to Vyas that the 'Fire of sorrow' consumed everything that came into its fold and nothing remained untouched by it. A sorrowful man becomes bereft of all his possessions-knowledge, religion, physical strength, patience, happiness and all such qualities.

Lord Brahma also told him that virtuous deeds never went without being rewarded, as all good things enjoyed by a man in his life are nothing but the result of his virtuous past 'Karmas'. On the contrary sinful deeds committed by a

man makes his present as well as his future births miserable. Further, glorifying the virtues of some other good deeds, Lord Brahma said-' Protecting the life of a person, whose life is endangered and who has sought one's refuge is the greatest virtue and no other deed can be compared with it. One who sheds his life to protect his religion attains to heaven.

A contented man enjoys even his adversities and remains unperturbed by them. A man should never miss a chance to get benefited by the company of enlightened souls because it gives him an opportunity to understand religion in a better way. Donating food begets incomparable virtues and no other virtuous deed stands anywhere near it.'

Lord Brahma concluded by describing Sanatan Dharma in a nutshell and said-' Anybody observing the following austerities should be considered an ardent follower of 'Sanatan Dharma'- truth, penance, self-control, purity, forgiveness, compassion, knowledge and donation.

14.11.1 The Supreme Yoga

Once, sage Shaunak asked Sutji about the reasons behind man's sorrow. Sutji told him that man's ego and his attachments to this mortal world were the two most important causes for his sorrow and until he gets rid of them he will continue to suffer. Sutji said-' The 'Tree of ignorance' sprouts from the seed of 'Egotism' and it receives its nutrition from sensual pleasures. Only those who possess the 'Axe of knowledge' are successful in felling this 'Tree of ignorance' and experience the ecstasy of Divine bliss. Once a man has experienced this divine bliss he not only becomes free from all kinds of sorrow but is also freed from the cycles of birth, death and rebirth. This divine link which a man establishes with the Almighty is called 'Mahayoga' (The supreme Yoga). But, those unfortunate people who have not experienced this divine bliss continue to get trapped by the worldly illusions leading to their countless births and deaths.'

Sutji then went on to describe the means by which a man can have a pure heart and said-' Austerities like meditation, worship, fasts, oblations, charity, etc., certainly helps a man in getting rid of all kinds of impurities.'

14.11.2 Devotion – The Path Leading to the Almighty

Glorifying devotion as the simplest means to reach God, Sutji told Shaunak that there was nothing else that pleased God more than the unflinching devotion of his devotee in him. Sutji said- 'A devotee who chants the holy name of God acquires imperishable virtues and attains salvation even if he were a lowly sinner. One who has surrendered himself to the will of God is absolved of all his sins. Even 'Yamaraj'- The lord of death has strictly instructed his escorts to spare those who are devotees of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu himself has declared that anybody having total devotion in him should be considered as the most virtuous soul even if he had committed the most heinous of sins.'

Further hailing the glory of chanting Lord Vishnu's name Sutji said-' The mere chanting of Lord Vishnu's name in 'Kaliyuga' brings the same virtue what the combined virtues of meditating on him during 'Satyayuga', chanting his sacred mantras during 'Tretayuga' and worshipping him during 'Dwaparyuga' brought. A devotee who has nothing but the sacred name of Lord Vishnu on his lips is certain to attain to Vishnuloka after becoming free from the bondage of this world. Chanting the divine name of Vishnu even in dreams is believed to absolve a man of all his sins then what to say about people who consciously chant his holy name while they are awake.'

Thus Sutji told sage Shaunak that anybody could attain salvation by simply having total devotion in Lord Vishnu as it was the most simplest path leading to the Almighty.

14.12 Divine Stotras

This chapter contains 3 sections as follows:

14.12.1 NriSinha Stotra

Telling about the origin of this 'stotra', Sutji said-
'Lord Shiva had created this 'stotra' praising the glory of Lord Nrisinha and invoking him to protect the world from the wrath of Matrikas. The 'stotra' goes as follows -

NAMASTESTU JAGANNATH NARSINHA VAPURDHAR;
DAITESHWAR ENDRA SANHARINAKHA BHUKTI VIRAJIT.

NAKH MANDAL SAMBHINNA HEMPINGAL VIGRAH;
NAMOSTU PADMANABHAY SHOBAHANAY JAGADGURO.

KALP ANTAMBHO DANIGHOSH SURYAKOTI SAMPRABHA;
SAHASTRA YAM SANTRAS SAHASTRENDRA PARAKRAM.

SAHASTRA DHANDASFEET SAHASTRA CHARANATMAKA;
SAHASTRA CHANDRA PRATIM SAHASTRANSU HARIKRAM.

SAHASTRA RUDRA TEJASKA SAHASTRA BRAHMA SANSTUT;
SAHASTRA RUDRA SANJAAT SAHASTRA AKSHA NIRIKSHANA.

SAHASTRA JANMA MATHANA SAHASTRA BANDH MOCHAN;
SAHASTRA VAYU VEGASA SAHASTRA ANGA KRIPAKAR.

14.12.2 Kulamrit Stotra

Sage Narad once asked Lord Shiva about the means by which a man could become free from the delusions of the world. Lord Shiva revealed to him the contents of 'Kulamrit stotra', eulogizing the majesty of Lord Vishnu. By chanting this 'stotra', Narad successfully attained to that supreme status, which even the most enlightened souls can only dream of. One who eulogizes Lord Vishnu by

chanting this 'stotra', becomes liberated from all the bondage of the world. The 'stotra' goes as follows -

YASTU VISHWAMANA DYANTA MAJAMAATMANI SANSTHITAM;
SARVAGYA MACHALAM VISHNUM SADA DHYAYET SA MUCHYET.

DEVAM GARBHO CHITAM VISHNUM SADA DHYAYAN VIMUCHYET;
ASHARIRAM VIDHATARAM SARVAGYAN MANORATIM.

ACHALAM SARVAGAM VISHNUM SADA DHYAYEN VIMUCHYET;
NIRVIKALPAM NIRABHASAM NISHPRAPANCHAM NIRAMAYAM.

VASUDEVAM GURUM VISHNUM SADA DHYAYEN VIMUCHYET;
SARVATKAM CHA VAI YAVADATMA CHAITANYA RUPAKAM.

SHUBHAM EKAKSHARAM VISHNUM SADA DHYAYEN VIMUCHYET;
VAMYATITAM TRIKALAGYAM VISHVESHAM LOKSAKSHINAM.

SARVA SMADYUTAM VISHNU SADA DHYAYEN VIMUCHYET;
BRAHMADI DEVA GANDHARVAI MUNIBHIH SIDDHA CHARANAIH.

YOGIBHIH SEVITAM VISHNUM SADA DHYAYEN VIMUCHYET;
SANSAR BANDHANAN MUKTI MICHHAMLEKO DHYA SHESHATAH.

STUTVAIVAM VARADAM VISHNUM SADA DHYAYAN VIMUCHYET;
SANSAR BANDHANAAT KOPI MUKTI MICHCHHAN SAMAHITAH.

ANANT MATYAYAM DEVAM VISHNUM VISHVA PRATISHTHITIM;
VISHVESHWAR MASARAM VISHNUM SADA DHYAYAN VIMUCHYET.

14.12.3 Mrityu Ashtak Stotra

Describing the origin of this 'stotra', Sutji said- 'Lord Vishnu himself had taught this powerful 'stotra' to sage Markandeya. The daily chanting of this powerful mantra had enabled Markandeya to conquer death. One who daily chants this 'stotra' thrice a day enjoys a long life and never dies a premature death. The 'stotra' goes as follows -

DAMODARAM PRASANNOSMI KINNO MRITYUH KARISHYATI;
SHANKH CHAKRA DHARAM DEVAM VYAKTA RUPIN MATYAYAM.

ADHOKSHAJAM PRAPANNOSMI KINNO MRITYUH KARISHYATI;
VARAHAM VAMANAM VISHNUM NAARSIHAM JANARDANAM.

MADHAVAM CHA PRAPANNOSMI KINNO MRITYUH KARISHYATI;
PURUSHAM PUSHKAR KSHETRABIJAM PUNYAM JAGATPATIM.

LOKNATHAM PRAPANNOSMI KINNO MRITYUH KARISHYATI;

SAHASTRA SHIRASAM DEVAM VYAKTA TYAKTAM SANATANAM.

MAHAYOGAM PRAPANNOSMI KINNO MRITYUH KARISHYATI;
BHUTATMANAM MAHATMANAM YAGYAYONI MAYOJINAM.

VISHVARUPAM PRAPANNOSMI KINNO MRITYUH KARISHYATI;
ITYUDI RITMARKANDYAM STOTRAM TASYA MAHATMANAH.

ITI TENA JITO MRITYU MARKANDE YEN DHIMTA;
PRASANNE PUNDARIKAKSHE NRISINHE NASTI DURLABHAM.

14.13 Salvation Through Yoga

This chapter contains 2 sections as follows:

Sutji told sage Shaunak that the ultimate aim of a man's life was to attain salvation. A man can not attain salvation until and unless he has seen through the trappings of the worldly illusions. Sutji said-'Practice of Yoga helps a man to live in this world with a sense of detachment and to successfully avoid the allurements of this mortal world. Yoga comprises of six organs:

- Pranayam (Breathing exercises),
- Japa (chanting),
- Pratyahar(restraining sense organs),
- Dharana (resolution),
- Dhyan (meditation) and
- Samadhi (deep meditation).

Not running after sensual pleasures by having self-control helps a man in diminishing his sins and diminishment of sins pleases the deities who give blessings. Blessings of deities help a man to attain salvation. Pranayam, an important part of Yoga is of two types-'Garbha' and 'Agarbha'. Pranayam, done with simultaneous chanting of a mantra is called 'Garbha' whereas in 'Agarbha' Pranayam mantras are not chanted.

It is natural for a man to get attracted by worldly pleasures and checking this tendency of the mind is called 'Pratyahar'. It is not easy to control the mind and concentrate on anything for a long time but 'Dharana' helps a man to do that. When a man has successfully controlled his sensual desires, then it becomes very easy for him to concentrate his mind. A concentrated mind finds it easy to meditate. When he has mastered meditation it is not much difficult for him to enter into the deep state of meditation i.e. 'Samadhi'. In the state of 'Samadhi', all sense of dualism cease to exist as one establishes divine link with the Almighty, which helps him in experiencing indescribable divine bliss.

14.13.1 Self Realization

Once, on being asked by sage Narad about the means that helped a man in attaining self realization, Lord Vishnu told him that only those privileged few who have understood the impermanent nature of this world and have

successfully controlled their sensual desires can attain self realization. All the mysteries of this Universe are unraveled to a man of self-realization and he attains salvation. Lord Vishnu said-' It should be the prime objective of a man to make incessant efforts so that he can experience this divine knowledge of self realization-the real knowledge, for every other kind of knowledge is superficial and of least significance.'

Lord Vishnu went on to describe how self-realization could be attained-

'YADASARVE VIMUCHYANTE KAMA YESHYA HRIDI STHITAH;
TADAMRIT TWA MAPNOPATI JIVANNEVA NA SANSHAYAH.

Meaning- When there is no desire left in the heart then a man is certain to experience the divine taste of this nectar (self realization) in his life time– and there is no doubt about it.

Unraveling the mystery of Universe to sage Narad, Lord Vishnu said-' 'Brahm' is the cause behind this universe and one who has understood this fact can be rightly called a man of self realization. A man being under the influence of his sensual perceptions falsely believes this world to be real and is unable to understand the real cause behind the existence of this world, which is not the case with a man of self-realization. Instead of searching 'without' a man should seek 'within' because within him exists the Universe just like our sense organs perceive them externally. The whole mystery of Universe is unraveled to a man who makes incessant efforts to undertake this inner journey for if his efforts are made with a pure heart and a firm determination then he is sure to reach his goal of self realization one day or the other. The soul (Atma) is 'Brahm' but this fact becomes apparent only to those privileged few, who have attained self-realization. Self realization illuminates the soul in the same way just as a lightning illuminates the dark sky at night.'

Lord Vishnu went on to describe himself in the following words-' I am Pure and beyond the limits of human intelligence. I am beyond the confinement of three basic qualities (Satva guna, Rajas guna and Tamas guna). Only he can experience ME who possesses an enlightened soul because I manifest MYSELF in the heart of every individual as a divine effulgence in order to drive away the darkness which engulfs it.'

14.13.2 Brahm-Gita

Anybody who studies the sacred texts of 'Brahm-Gita' is certain to attain salvation for it brilliantly propounds the theory of divinity of man by proclaiming that in each individual dwells 'Brahm'-the supreme Almighty. Eulogizing the glory of 'Brahm Gita' Lord Vishnu said-' Brahm-Gita declares that in each individual dwells 'Brahm' and one who has understood this fact becomes free from the bondage of the world i.e. attains salvation. Nobody can deny the fact that God exists because the Almighty manifests himself all around us in various forms both perceptible and imperceptible. All the five elements (space, air,

water, fire and earth) are nothing but the manifestations of Almighty God.'

' Unfortunately, most of the people are unaware of the presence of divinity in them- the existence of 'Brahm' in each of them. The reason for this is not much difficult to comprehend because this fact is so subtle that only enlightened souls can experience it. HE lies dormant and cannot be experienced until and unless HE is awakened by means of austerities and penance. 'Brahm' is ever present in a man and does not abandon him in any of the three states of his consciousness- while he is awake, while he is dreaming or even while he is asleep.

Despite being present in every individual he still remains unaffected by his deeds because by nature HE is eternally pure. One more reason why man is unable to feel the presence of 'Brahm' in himself is his own ego, with which he falsely develops deep association. So, a person who is desirous of realizing God must first subdue his ego so that 'Brahm' manifests himself in all his glory. Without subduing his 'ego' a man can never realize God because the sense of dualism is the greatest impediment in the path of God realization and 'egotism' only strengthen this sense of dualism.'

'Once man has successfully subdued his ego, the dawning of God realization becomes imminent because 'Brahm' now has no problem in manifesting himself in the changed scenario. 'Brahm' who is absolute truth, eternally pure and the supreme Almighty. HE is the eternal bliss dwelling in each individual- the realization which made the Vedas to proclaim 'Tatvam Asi'(Thou is me) and who is beyond the confinement of time and space.'

Ultimately, Lord Vishnu revealed to sage Narad that 'Brahm' whose glory he had praised was none other than himself.

14.14 Garuda's Queries

This chapter contains 2 sections as follows:

Sutji once reached the forest of 'Naimisharanya' in course of his journey. Naimisharanya was a holy place where sages and hermits went to do penance. After reaching there Sutji met many prominent sages who were pleased at his arrival. They took it as a God sent opportunity to get their doubts cleared on the mystery called death and what exactly happened after a man died.

Sage Shaunak, one of those sages, asked Sutji-' O Revered Sage! We were just awaiting your arrival. It seems God has listened to our prayer. We are confused by so many diverse and contradictory opinions expressed on the mystery of 'death' and what happens after death. Some people are of the belief that a man takes rebirth soon after his death whereas there are some who believe that a man after his death first goes to 'Yamloka' to taste the fruits of his 'Karmas' and only then he takes rebirth. We request you to clear our doubts and enlighten us on the mystery called death.'

Sutji recounted the tale of Garuda, who had once posed the same query to Lord Krishna. While narrating the tale, Sutji said- 'Garuda-son of Vinta, once decided to get a first hand experience of all the three 'Lokas'(worlds). After visiting all the three worlds he returned to 'Vaikunth loka' and narrated his experiences to Lord Krishna.

Garuda said- ' After visiting all the three 'Lokas' I found the Earth (Prithvi) little overcrowded as compared to other 'Lokas'. I also found that it provided better opportunities to a man both for materialistic enjoyments as well as his spiritual advancement. So, I have come to the conclusion that 'Prithviloka' was the best of all the 'Lokas' in every respect. But, all round prevalence of sorrow and misery in 'Prithviloka' made me sad.

I was really perplexed to see people performing complex rituals after the death of their relative. All these rituals appeared so absurd to me. I was really amazed to see people laying down their dead relatives on the ground. I could also not understand why a dead body is laid on the bed of 'kusha' grass and sesame seeds. I witnessed so many rituals that surprised me, for instance I could not understand the reason why donations are made after a man dies. I am puzzled by the mystery called death or, what becomes of him after he dies.

The sight of sons lifting the dead body of their father on their shoulders is still fresh in my memory. I could not understand the reason why 'ghee'(clarified butter) is applied on a dead body or why the relatives of the deceased chant 'Yama sukta' facing north. I was also surprised to see the son of the deceased being debarred from having meal along with his other relatives. O Lord! Please reveal to me the significance of making 'pinda- daans' or, the significance of 'tarpan' rituals? Please tell me the proper method of offering 'pinda daan' and invoking ancestors? I find it hard to believe that all the deeds virtuous or evil committed by a man follows him after his death.'

This way Garuda flooded Lord Krishna with a barrage of questions and sought clarifications on them.

14.14.1 Salvation through Rituals

Lord Krishna replied–" I am so delighted that you have asked such important questions for the benefit of mankind. I am revealing to you the secrets, which were hitherto unknown even to the deities and yogis. O Garuda! A man should try to beget a son with the help of means as mentioned in the scriptures because there is no salvation for a person bereft of son."

Lord Krishna then went on to describe the proper rituals which are performed after the death of a man and said-" First of all, the area should be purified by coating it with a layer of cow-dung. This purified area is called 'mandal' and it is graced by the presence of the 'Trinity'– Brahma, Shiva and Myself. Sesame seeds are then sprinkled on the purified area and kusha grass is spread. A

person whose death is imminent is then laid down on the bed of kusha grass. Scriptures say that a person who does not leave his mortal body in the above mentioned way, wanders hither and thither in the form of a restless spirit. No amount of rituals can put such a soul to rest. O Garuda! Sesame seed has manifested from my sweat and hence is extremely pure. All kind of evil forces like, ghosts, spirits, demons, etc. keep away from the place where it is used.

Similarly, Kusha grass has manifested from my body hair and is graced by the presence of 'Trinity'– Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. Deities are satisfied if kusha grass is offered to them while ancestors are satisfied by the offerings of sesame seeds. Scriptures say that if dying man is laid down on the bed of kusha grass spread on the land purified by cow-dung, he becomes absolved of all his sins. There is a great significance of donating salt after the death of a person. Salt owes its origin to Me and donating it helps ancestors in attaining heaven. Donating salt also helps in reducing the pain and sufferings of a dying man and this is why it is donated along with other articles after a death of a person. The relatives of the deceased should chant the sacred 'Yama sukta' facing north because it helps him to attain liberation." Lord Krishna then explained to Garuda the appropriate way of carrying the corpse to the cremation ground–" The dead body should be carried to the cremation ground by the sons an other relatives of the deceased. In the cremation ground the dead body should be kept in such a way that it's head should be either towards east or north. The pyre should be made either of sandal or 'palash' wood."

Describing the experiences of the soul when it leaves the body, Lord Krishna said–" The soul leaves the mortal body with great reluctance because the attachment with the mortal world exists even after his death. Yamdoots, descend down to earth to take the soul of the dying man to Yamloka. Those who have committed grave sins are tied with ropes and taken to Yamloka with great humiliation but virtuous souls are taken with honour and due respect. Yamraj- the lord of death receives the virtuous soul with all the honour and respect and metes out punishment to those who had committed sins during their lives.

In his dark complexion and with a buffalo as his mount and with a noose and iron stick in his hands, Yamraj appears terrifying. On the other hand, the sight of lifeless body appears disgusting and people try to dispose it off as quickly as possible because it is worthless without a soul. So, one must try to make the best use of this mortal body by indulging in good deeds before the day of his final journey arrives otherwise he would be left with nothing but regrets at the time of his death.

14.14.2 Death and After

Continuing with his narration, Lord Krishna said–" O Garuda! Death comes at the predetermined time, which remains fixed and unaltered under all circumstances. A man's sense organs become weak and his body feeble, which gets inflicted with numerous diseases in his old age. At the time of his death,

man experiences unbearable pain and he begins to loose his consciousness. Yamdoots arrive and begin to retrieve the soul from the body and this aggravates the pain. Ultimately, the soul, which is not more than the size of a thumb, reluctantly comes out from the body as the attachment with the world exists even after his death. But, a virtuous person does not go through all these painful experiences at the time of his death. The soul has to take birth in different species as well as go through cycles of countless births, deaths and rebirths in order to taste the fruits of his Karmas.

Describing the significance of 'Pinda daan' rituals, Lord Vishnu told Garuda that they are performed so that manes are satiated. He also revealed to him that six pinda daans are offered to the manes while performing the rituals of last rites–" The first 'pinda-daan' is made at the place where person has breathed his last while the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth 'Pinda daans' are made at the main entrance of the house, the nearest cross-roads, the cremation ground, on the pyre itself and at the time of collecting last remains (Asthi) respectively.

After reaching the cremation ground the dead body should be laid down with its head towards south. The mortal body then should be consigned to flames and after some time sesame seeds and ghee should be poured into the burning pyre so that it continues to burn without any problem. For the next ten days the relatives coming from the same gotra of the deceased should observe a period of 'Ashaucha'- a period during which he observes strict austerities and avoids social contacts. The son of the deceased is prohibited from having food along with his relatives simply because he is believed to be impure during this period."

This way, being satisfied by Lord Krishna's answers, Garuda thanked him for clearing whatever doubts he had in his mind. Lord Krishna blessed him.

END OF GARUDA PURAN

15 Brahmananda Purana

It is the eighteenth Purana. Presently available in separate pieces, Adhyatma Ramayana is also included in this Purana, but the present versions of Brahmand Purana do not contain Adhyatma Ramayan. It has four parts-Prakriya, Anushanga, Upotaghat and Upasamhar. This Purana is said to be narrated by Sutaji on the bank of the river Drishdvati in Yaksh kshetra (identified with Sutlej in modern Himachal Pradesh). From his narration, it is clear that Sutaji had heard the Purana from Veda Vyasa who, in his turn, received it from Vayudev.

Creation of the universe, determination of Kalpa, differentiation of Yugas, description of Manvantaras, description of Jambudweep and Bharatvarsh, description of Kimpurush. Anudweep, Ketumaal varsh etc. and description of Bharat vansha, Prithu vansha, Dev vansh, Rishi vansh, Agni vansh and preceptors are the main topics of Brahmand Purana.

Described in the Purana, Adhyatma Ramayana has seven parts. First part describes the Brahmaswarup (cosmic appearance) of Shri Rama. Incarnation of Lord Rama to relieve the earth from the atrocities of the demons. Baal-leela (childhood plays). Emancipation of Ahilya. Removal of Bhargava?s (Parashuram?s) ego. Second part contains: Lord Rama?s going into exile. Demise of Dashrath. Aranyakand describes killing of the illusionary deer and abduction of Sita. Kishkindha khand describes the killing of Baali. Search of Sita. Sundar Khand has the tales of Hanuman?s entry into Lanka. Lanka khand contains the description of killing of Ravana and coronation of Lord Rama upon his return to Ayodhya. In Uttar Khand reasons for Ravana?s birth have been described. It also contains the description of Sita?s desertion by Rama. Desertion of Lakshmana. Coronation of Luv and Kush and departure of Rama to his original Vaikunth loka.

This Purana consists of xx chapters:

15.1 Chapter

text

15.1.1 Section

text

16 Shrimad Bhagavata Purana

This Purana contains 12 Chapters – each with many sub-sections.

Introduction

Shrimad Bhagwad is regarded as a delicious fruit of Veda-Kalpa the period of four Yugas during which Vedas are supposed to be written. There is nothing abdicable in Shrimad Bhagwad. The Bhagwadkar (the orator of Shrimad Bhagwad) invites all the devotees in the world to relish this great scripture. Shrimad Bhagwad is a contemporary of Vedas; there is a profuse mention of Karm (action), Upasana (worship) and Gyan (knowledge) in Vedas, but Bhakti (devotion) could not find a place in Vedas.

Shrimad Bhagwad compensates for this drawback, for it has vivid and comprehensive description of Bhakti (devotion). No action, worship and knowledge can exist without devotion. Presentation style of Shrimad Bhagwad is also remarkable; it's every page is flowing in the stream of devotion. All the forms and appearances of God have been described exhaustively. It is such a benevolent scripture that mere hearing of it even without getting it's meaning, is beneficial for the listener. If however one reflects on the meaning of the content, it would be a bonus. There are many examples in the past (when even the most dreaded sinister received salvation by mere hearing of Shrimad Bhagwad. Sinister Dhundhukari, who was in ghost form, is one such example. King Parikshit too, had a sight of his own soul by listening to Shrimad Bhagwad. Such examples are getting scarcer now days. Even then the devotees who really relish Bhagwad get free from the fears of death.

Shrimad Bhagwad makes a man fearless. Dhruv rode the death itself for his heavenly departure. Pitamah Bheeshma turned away the inevitable death many times. Hence, those devotees who have taken a shelter at Shrimad Bhagwad develop faith in themselves. Then they have no fear of death. Shrimad Bhagwad is an immortal scripture that generates devotion. It is a means to find God without Yoga and Tapa.

Virtues like unconditional love, generosity, grace, kindness and protection of the refugee, that are the adornments of God, have been described in simple, easy to grasp way in Shrimad Bhagwad. Virtues of God like His playing and chatting with ordinary people and helping them in every circumstance sympathetically, naturally attract the people towards him. Bhagwad makes a man free from doubts. It is a supreme creation by Vyasaji. Bhagwad is in fact an appearance of Narayana. It is a complete scripture. Fiddles get guidance by listening to it, while the infidels become fiddle. Even the sage like Shukdevji, who deserted everything, couldn't give up the temptation to hear Shrimad Bhagwad. It is a life giver to all kind of people. It has a beautiful balance between the practice and altruism. It has a comprehensive content regarding the knowledge, action,

social duties, women's duties, religion and politics etc. Having heard and reflected over Shrimad Bhagwad, there remains nothing to know then. In the present era the society has neglected the knowledge, devotion and spirituality. It regards physical achievements as everything. Bhagwad does not forbid or deny the physical achievements, but it gives a message to acquire a balanced view for them-neither too much indifference nor too much indulgence.

TATHANATE MADHAV TAVAKAH KVACHIT BHRASHYANTI MARGAT VADI BADDH SAHRIDAI.
TVAYA BHIGUPTA VICHARANTI NIRBHAYA VINAYAKANIKAPAMURDHA SUPRABHO.
TAVAD RAGA DAYAN STEMASTAVAD KARAGRIHAM GRIHAM
TAVANMOHONDHRI NIGADO YAVAT KRISHNA NA TE JANAM.

Preface

Created by Maharshi Badrayan an epithet of Ved Vyas Shrimad Bhagwad Mahapuran is an immortal heritage of the world's ancient literature. It is no less than ambrosia. Shrimad Bhagwad is equally honored by the learned ones, devotees, sages and the metaphysical researchers.
Tales from the time of the beginning of creation to the Pralaya Kaal (The great deluge) have been skillfully interwoven in Shrimad Bhagwad. Because of it's unique, dialogue like presentation style, Shrimad Bhagwad is an encyclopaedia in itself.

VADANTI TATTATTVAVIDAH TATTVAM YAOGYANAM DVAYAM |
BRAHNETI PARA MATMETI BHAGAVA NITI SHABDYATE |

Word Bhagwad literally means God or akin to God. All the virtues of God, therefore and even those of His devotees are expressed by this seemingly simple word, Bhagwad which has been transformed into an immortal scripture by Krishna.

Vyasji:

IDAM BHAGVATAM NAM PURANAM BRAHMA SAMBHITAM |
UTTAM SHLOR CHARITAM CHAKAR BHAGWANARASHIH ||

During the twilight of Dwapar Yuga, Maharashi Veda-Vyas taught this scripture to his son Shukdev. Origin of Shrimad Bhagwad is even older. In the tradition of Shrimad Bhagwad, God Narayan himself narrated its content to Brahma. Brahma narrated it to Devarshi Narad who preached it to Badrayan Vyas. Vyas brought it into scriptural form and handed it to his son Shuk Dev. Shukdev, in his turn, preached Shrimad Bhagwad to the king Parikshit and SUTJI. King Parikshit died soon after hearing it, while SUTJI narrated this scripture to the sages like Shaunak et al. in Nemisharanya during his thousand years stay there.

PURAN SANHITAMETAMRISHIRNARAYANO AVYAYAM |
NARADAY PURA PRAH KRISHNDVAI PAYNAY SAH ||
SAVAI MAHYM MAHARAJ BHAGVAN BADRAYANAH|
IMAM BhagwadI PRITAH SANHITAM VED SAMMITM ||

ETAM VAKSHVYASAV SUT RISHTIBMYO NAIMISHALAYE|
DIRGHSATARE KURUSHRESHTH SAMPUSHRAH SHUANAKADIBHIM||

The greatest feature of Bhagwad is that it illustrates the mutual but eternal relationship of the Jivatma (microcosm) and Pramatma (the supreme sprit.) It also illustrates the selfless dedication of the devotees and unconditional love of God for His devotees. Thus it introduces one with oneself and hence leads him to salvation. The author has beautifully woven the plays of God into enticing tales with the help of the yarns of knowledge, devotion and action:

VASUDEVE BHAGVATI BHAKTI YOGA PRAYOJITAH |
JANYATYA SHUVAIRAGYAM GYANAM CHA YADHETUKAM ||

EVAM PRASANN MANASO BHAGWAD BHAKTIYOGATAM |
BHAGVATTA TTVA VIGYANAM MUKT SANGASY JAYATE ||

This story of God attracts the learned ones like Shiv, Sanak, Shuk etc. as much as it pleases the common people who are stricken with many kinds of evils. It is indeed a wealth for the lovers of Bhagwad, devotees and other religious people.

TAV KATHAMRITAM TAPT JIVANAM KAVIBHIRIDITAM KALM SHAPAHAM |
SHRAVAN MANGALAM SHRIMADATATAM, BHUVIGANATITE BHURIDA JANAM ||

Hence, the excellent, easily available and simple means to know the self are reciting, remembering and singing in praise of Lord Krishna. Paramatma (Lord) enters the heart of the devoted listener of Hari Charitra (virtues of God) in verbal form and destroys the blemishes present there.

SANKIRTYAMANO BHAGWANANTO SHRI TANUBHAVO VYASANAM HI PUNSHAM PRAVISHTH CHINTAM VIDHU NOTYSHESHAM YATHA TAMORKOABHRA MIVATIVATAH.

It is clear, therefore, that without resorting to any other difficult and mysterious means, one can afford his well being simply by taking refuge at Bhagwad. Instead, dedicating himself to God and remembering Him, one gets the love of God in his mundane life. Such an achievement is rare even for great ascetics.

AHOATIDHANYA VRAJ GORAMANYAM STANYAMRITAM PITMTN TEE MUDA |
AHOBHAGYAMAHOBHAGY NAND GOR VRAJAIKSAM |
YANMICHAM PARMANANDAM PURNAM BRAMHA SANATANAM ||

16.1Chapter 1

This chapter contains 12 sub-sections.

VASUDEVSUTAM DEVAM KANS CHANUR MARDANAM |
DEVAKI PARMANANDAM KRISHAM VANDE JAGAD GURUM ||
NARAYANAM NAMASKRITY NARAM CHAIV NAROTTAMAM |
DEVI SARASWATIM CHAIV TATO JAY MUNDIRAYET ||
YAH SWANU BHAVAM-KHILK SHRUTI SARMEKAM DHYATM DIPMATI TITIRSHATAMTAMOADAM |
SANSARINAM KARUNAAAH PURAN GUHYAM TAM VYAS SUNUMUPAYAMI GURUM MUNINAM ||

16.1.1 Obeisance to the Supreme Being

We meditate to that Paramatma (Supreme Being) who is the eternal truth; and who creates the universe, holds it and causes Pralaya. He is the light independence and from of knowledge in himself. He causes illusions even for the most knowledgeous ones. Yet, He is far beyond all the illusions.

In Shrimad Bhagwad, created by the great sage Vyasaji, There is a description of the supreme religion, which is free from desire. There is also a description of Paramatmatatva (the metaphysical entity) that every pious people with holy spirit must know about.
Shrimad Bhagwad is a delicious and relishing fruit of Vedas. Because of a touch of Shri Shukacharya's lips, it is impregnated with blissful nectar. So, as long as there is life in his body, a devotee keeps on relishing this nectar of divine scripture. It is easily available right here on the earth itself.

16.1.2 Performance of Gyan Yagya

In the beginning of the Kalyug, sages like Shaunak et al organized a vast Gyan Yagga in the holy region of the Naimisharanya. The purpose of the yagya was the benefit of the common people and it was to last for a millennium. To quench the spiritual curiosity of the sages, SUTJI, the orator of Puranas, also arrived there. Felicitating him, the sages asked SUTJI, " O great sage, by the grace of Vyasji, you have learned all the Purans, history, religion etc. You also know about all the other subjects as well. So kindly narrate the tale which could surely benefit the common people so that they too can experience the real spiritual joy."

16.1.3 Sutji narrates Purana

Pleased by the curiosity of the sages, SUTJI said, " O great sages, it is extremely auspicious to talk about Lord Krishna. Only by discussing about the God, can the mind of the people be freed from illusions. Love then begins to emerge in it for God and it begins to detach itself from physical comfort and experience the blissful joy.

16.1.4 Lord Vishnu – The Source of All Creation

Driven by the desire, the Adipurush (primitive being) Narayan took the help of his Prakriti (nature's female creational force) and generated himself in Chaturbhuj (four-armed) from. And from His navel appeared Lord Brahma, the creator. That form of God was full of pure truth and from the parts of His body, all the Lokas (worlds) got extension. Metaphysicists saw the God with innumerable heads, eyes, arms and legs. That endless, eternal Supreme Being was the source of all the Avatars (incarnations) and from the parts of His body were created Gods, human beings, birds animals and all other creatures.

From the ages, twenty-four incarnations of that Supreme being, like Sanakadi Kumar, Varah, Narad, Nar-Narayana, Kapil, Dattatreya, Rishabhdev, Prithu, Matsya, Kachchhap, Dhanvantari, Mohini, Narsinh, Vaman, Parshu Ram, Vyas Shri Rama, Balarama, Krishna and Buddha have appeared to guard the people and to remove the burden from the earth, and to salve their devotees and gentlemen. SUTJI says, " blessed are those who have unconditional love for Lord Vasudev, the lord of the universe. Such people don't fall again and again, in the cycles of life and death. Bhagwad Mahapuran is such a scripture in which the great sage VedVyas describes the holy and pious tales of the God. For the benefit of the people, VedVyas compiled this great scripture taking extracts of all the Vedas, and other ancient treatises. Reading, hearing or reflecting on which, the human being inclines to devotion and finds salvation.

SHRIMADBhagwadAM PURANAMA MALAMYA DVATSHNAVANAM PRIYAM |
YASMIN PARAM HANSYA MEKAMAMALAL GYANAM PARAM GIYATE ||
YATRA GYAN VIRAG BHAKTI SAHITAM NASH KAMRYAMA VISHHRITAM |
TACHCHHRIVAN VIPATMAN VICHARAN PARO BHAKTYA VIMUCHYE NNARAH ||

16.1.5 The Creation and Compilation of the Purana

Shaunkji asked, " When that tale was compiled in scriptural form, that was later on related by Shukdevji. Where was it created? For what purpose and by whose inspiration, that scripture was compiled and how did Shukdevji, who was congenital wandered, came to study this scripture, and how he came to see the king Parikshit? What discussion took place between them?"

What SUTJI narrated to the sages, forms the main body of the great scripture Shrimad Bhagwad.-

16.1.6 Ved-Vyas – The Partial Incarnation

Vedvyasji had appeared in Dwapar Yuga. He was the son of Maharshi Parashar and Satyawati then known as Matsyagandha. Vyasji was a partial incarnation of the God. Vedvyasji effected a division of Vedas, created Puranas conceptualized history (Mahabharata-which was actually jotted down by none other than Lord Ganesha.) He also established different faculties for teaching his disciples. Yet staying in his hermitage at the banks of the river Saraswati, he was not satisfied with his performance. Something was still writhing within his heart to come out.

So he was feelling upset and was unable to find a reason for his dejection. Just then, Devarshi Narad arrived there, and saw that Mahatma Vyas was upset. As nothing was concealed from Naradji, he told him the reasons for his moroseness.

16.1.7 Naradji's Advice to Ved-Vyas

Naradji told him that though he had created great epics, yet all of them lack a devotional description of God. That was why his soul was still writhing. Naradji also suggested him to describe the glory of Hari, or neither his voice, nor his creation would ever get pure. Devarshi Narad then narrated the tale of God and the glory of His devotees to Vyasji and said, "O great soul, look at the effect of devotion and company of the pious people that I have become Devarshi from an ordinary son of a maid"

After the departure of Naradji, Vyasji sat in meditation and experienced the illusion that caught the life. He also experienced devotion. Thus, his fresh experience led Vedvyasaji to create this great scripture. The virtues of God had such a strong attraction that,lured by them, even self-indulgent Shukdevi ran back from the jungles to his father and prayed to let him read that scripture.

**HARERGUNA KSHIPTMATI BHAGWAN VAD RAYANIH |
ADHYAGAN MHRIDAKHYANAM TITYAM VISHNU JAN PRIYAH ||**

**PARINISHTHITOAPI NAIRGUNY UTTAM SHLOK LEELAYA |
GRIHEET YETA RAJARSHE AKHYANAM YAD DHITVAN ||**

Because of their link with Lord Shri Krishna, SUTJI narrates the stories of Pamdavas, their heavenly departure, coronation of Parikshit, his all round victories etc. as per their sequences in Mahabharat. He also narrates the episodes of Ashwatthama the son of Guru Drona, worship of God by Kunti etc. and migration of Lord Krishna to Dwaraka.

16.1.8 King Parikshit encounters Kali Yuga

During his regime, the king Parikshit got untoward reports that Kaliyug had entered within the limits of his otherwise peaceful kingdom. With a huge army, Parikshit at once setout to the spot where Kaliyug had arrived. On the way he saw the religion and the earth in the guises of a bull and a cow respectively. The cow was in death-like condition, while the bull was somehow dragging himself on one leg only as its three legs were broken. He also saw that a king-like, but impolite man was beating them ruthlessly with a stick. From a distance, the king Parikshit shouted at the man, "You scoundrel, why are you beating such helpless creatures in my kingdom?" Saying this, the king Parikshit drew his sword to kill the evil Kali. But the clever Kali fell at the feet of the king. For Kali was now in the king's refuge, he did not kill him, but ordered that being an assistant of irreligious, he should at once leave the kingdom. Kali then asked, " O king wherever I go, I find you ready to kill me with you bow and arrow. You tell

me where should I go and where should I live?" The king allowed Kali to live in five things– gambling, drinking of wine, company of women, violence and the Gold. Since then, Kali i.e. the dispute has had a continuos association with these five things. Hence, anybody disirous of self-improvement must avoid these five things which are governed by Kali.

16.1.9 King Parikshit dishonors Sage Shamik

One day, king Parikshit went on a hunting excursion. Till noon, he could not find a game. He was feeling restless because of hunger, thirst and fatigue. Searching water and shelter the king reached the hermitage of the sage Shamik. Shamik was in deep meditation so he did not welcome the king. For the first time the king Parikshit grew angry with a Brahmin. As a revenge and to show his anger he hanged a dead snake around the sage's neck.

Maharshi Shamik's son Shringi was also an effluent person. When he came to know about his father's insult by the king Parikshit, he cursed him that on the seventh day from that moment, Takshak, the Naga would bite the king for his violation of kingly glory. There in the capital, king Parikshit realized his mistake and felt sorry for his deed. But he welcomed the curse. Transferring the kingdom to his son Janamejay, king Parikshit reached the banks of the river Ganges and sat there on a fast unto death. Very soon all the great sages and kings began to throng there. King Parikshit welcomed them and begged them to recite the plays of God for him. He also asked what a creature ought to do always, and what were the duties of those who face an imminent death.

16.1.10 Shukhdevji's Arrival

At that moment the ever-wandering, indifferent-natured sage Shukdevji also arrived there. He was self indulgent and free from the bondages of ashrams (phases of life). He was then only sixteen years old but appeared quite radiant and graceful.

TATRA BHAVAD BHAGVAN VIAS PUTRO, YADRICHCHHAYA GAMARMANO ANOYESHAH |
ALASKHYLINGO NIJLABHTUSHTO VRITASHCH BALAIRAVADHOOT VESHAH ||

SHYAMAM SADAYICHY VAYOANG LAKSHMYA, STRINAM MANO GYAM RUCHIR SMITEN |
PRATYATTHITASTE MANUYAH SWASNEMTAH, TATLAKSHANAGYA API GURH VARCH SAM ||

Shukdevji was an honorable figure even for the sages who had gathered there as gust themselves. King Parikshit formally welcomed and worshiped Shukdevji and offered him a comfortable seat. King Parikshit then prayed to him, " O sage, Lord Krishna is definitely pleased with me. That's why He has sent a great sage like you to salve a wretched person like me. So, O Mahatma (the great

soul), kindly remove my doubts and guide me regarding the duties of a human-being? What should one acquire and what should one drop?"

16.2 Chapter 2

This chapter is very short – containing only 2 sub-sections.

16.2.1 Contents of this Chapter

Shri Shukdevji says 'O King, ordinary people literally waste their lives in petty matters like useless discussions, worry, sleep and feeding themselves. Those who wish to conquer their fears, O Parikshit, must listen to, recite and remember the tales that depict the plays of Lord Shri Krishna. The human birth can be successful only if by any means one has a remembrance of God in his last moments. All the scriptures also dictate the same doctrine:

TASMAD BHARAT SARVATMA BHAGWANISHVASE HARIH ||
SHROTAVYAH KIRTI TAVYASHCH SMARTAV YASHCHE CHCHHA TAMAYAM |
ETAVAN SHANKHY YOGABHYAM SWADHRM PARINISHTHAYA |
JANM LABHAH PARAH PUNSAMANTE NARAYAN SMRITIH ||

ETANNNIRVI DYAMANA NAMICHCHH TAMKUTOBHAYAM |
YOGINAM NRIPANIRNITAM HARER NA MANUKIRTANAM ||

One should remember the huge, macro as well as micro form of the omnipresent God, and must not long for the physical objects. Shukdevji then revealed the kinds of Mukti (salvation) as told in Vedas and said: 'O King, there is no other way as beneficial as the means to achieve the affectionate devotion of Lord Vasudev. Hence, every human being must in all circumstances, use his might in listening to, reciting and remembering the name of Lord Shrihari.

TASMAT SARVATMANA RAJAN HARIH SARVATR SARVADA |
SHROTAVYAH KIRTITAVYASHCH SMARTANYO BHAGWANNRINAM||

Though as per the interest, nature, and the desires of different people, and pleased by their worship, many gods oblige their devotees within their powers. But materialization of mundane desires of the innocent people has disastrous consequences. Learned people, therefore, whether they have or haven't any desire, worship Purushottam God with fervent devotion.

AKAMAH SARUKAMO VA MOKSHKAM UDARDHIH |
TIUREN BHAKTI YOGEN YAJET PURUSHAM PARAM ||

16.2.2 Creation of the World

The king Parikshit felt extreme pleasure when Shukdevji satisfied his queries. He then began to feel submerged in the stream of Bhagwad Katha (tale of the God). His selfish worries regarding his own benefits existed no more. He insisted again: O Brahmin, now kindly explain how does the God create the universe out

of illusions. How does He preserve the universe? How does He destroy it? At the instance of the king, Shukdevji contemplated on the God and presented the dialogue of Brahma and Narad that illustrates the Maitreya nature of the creation.

Brahamaji had preached Narad that because of Paramatma's (Supreme Being) desire of creation, this universe into existence from the primitive elements. Lord Brahma also told that after creating the universe God himself entered it. Hence, the whole universe is a manifestation of God's infinite appearance. His virtues can not be counted. But, to show his presence, Narayan takes various incarnations and appears on earth time and again. Merely, by listening to various beautiful and enticing plays of God, the mind, voice, thoughts and the soul of a human being become holy.

PRAVISHTHAH KARN RAN DHREN SWANAM BHAV SARORUHAM |
DHUNOTI SHAMALAM KRISHN SALILASY YATHA SHARAT ||

Parikshit again put forth many new queries regarding creation. Shukdevji related the events like emergence of Brahamji on a lotus that cropped up from the navel of Lord Vishnu, sighting of Lord Vishnu's abode by Lord Brahma, preaching of Bhagwad to Lord Brahma by Lord Vishnu and Dashlakshan (ten indents) of Bhagwad etc.

ATH SARGOVISARGASHCH STHANAM POSHNAMUTAYAH |
MANVANTARE SHANUKATHA NIRODHO MUKTIRASHRAYAH ||
DASHAMASY VISHUDDAYARTHAM NAVANAMIM LAKSHANAM |

16.3 Chapter 3

This chapter contains 8 sub-sections.

16.3.1 Contents of the third Chapter

VIDURODDHAV SANVADAH KSHATRMAITREY YOSTATHA |
PURAN SANHITA PRASHNO MAHA PURUSH SANATHITIH ||
AVATARO BhagwadAH KAPILASY MAHATMANAH |
DEVHUTYASHCH SANVADH KAPILEN CHA DHIMATA ||

16.3.2 Vidur warns Dhritarashtra

Shri Shukdevji says, "O Parikshit, Vidurji deserted his homely comforts and luxuries because he had to protest against injustice." When, after losing in the game of dice, the Pandavas successfully passed the period of their exile and stay in guise, and were denied even then of their rightful share in the kingdom, Vidurji was summoned for consultations. Vidurji had then suggested Dhritrashtra thus "O king, if you wish to save your family, you please abandon Duryodhan who is an embodiment of all the evils. He is jealous of none other than Lord Krishna. That is why you are getting dull day by day and loosing your radiance." These words infuriated Duryodhan so much so that he began to abusively insult Vidurji. But, Vidurji didn't mind his words even though he felt

seriously hurt at heart. Accepting his insult as a play of God, Vidurji silently left Hastinapur and went on a pilgrimage.

GAM PARYATAN YEDHYAVIVIKTVRITIH |
SADAPLUTOADHAH SHAYANOAVADHUTAH ||
ALAKSHITAH SVAIRAVDHUT VESHO |
VRATANI CHERE HARITOSHANANI ||

16.3.3 Vidur comes to know about Kaurava's Destruction

Travelling through various pilgrimage places, Vidurji reached Prabhas region where he got the news of total destruction of the Kaurvas. The news deeply moved him. In search of solace, he continued to wander from one place of pilgrimage to another place. During his wandering, when he reached the banks of the river Yamuna, Vidurji met Uddhavji the selfless and calm server of God. They both met affectionately and enquired about the wellbeing of each other. They were both reflecting on the plays of Lord Krishna and feeling extreme joy. Vidurji had also got the news of departure of Lord Krishna to his abode and destruction of Yadavas by fierce infightings. So he was extremely depressed also. Uddhavji told him that Lord Krishna himself had bestowed His grace on him and preached Bhagwad gyan, which He had once preached to Lord Brahma. By the dictate of Lord, Uddhavji was going to Badrikasharma. So he suggested Vidurji to see Maitreya for the metaphysical knowledge, for before departing to his abode, Lord Krishna had dictated him (Maitreya) to preach Bhagwad to Vidurji. As per the suggestion, Vidurji reached Haridwar and saw the sage Maitrey on the banks of the river Ganges.

16.3.4 Vidur meets Maitrey

The pious Vidurji respectfully greeted the sage Maitreya and said, "O lord, the people in this world perform various actions with a desire to have pleasure. But neither do they get pleasure nor is their sorrow removed. Their sorrow increases instead. What is good then, is this context?

SUKMAY KARMANI KAROTI LOKE |
NA TAIH SUKMAM VANYADUPARAMAN VA ||
VINDETMUYAS TAT OEVAM DUKHAM |
YADATR YUKTAM BHAGWAN VADENNAM ||

O great among the sages, kindly preach me the way to peace, following which, one meets the God who then takes abode in the heart of his devotee and instills in him the Santan Gyan (eternal knowledge) that lets the devotee feel the direct presence of Him.

TAT SADHU VARYADISH VARTM SHAM NAH, SAMRADHITO BHAGWAN YEN PUNSAM ||
HRIDSTHITO YACHCHHATI BHAKTI PUTE, GYANAM SATA TVADHI GAMAM PURANAM ||

Thus asked with devotion by Vidurji, Mahatma Maitreya illuminated the glory of God and other events like creation of universe by illusion and origin of colossus body, and said: No one can measure the eternal glory of God and the illusions created by Him.

In the beginning God created the primitive elements and the flaws associated with them. Then he created the colossus universe and entered it.

16.3.5 Description of 10 Ways of Creation by Maitrey

1. By the inspiration of God and because of imbalance in pious virtues, creation of Mahattatva (the soul) was the first (Mahattatva the soul).
2. From Mahattatva (the soul) originates Ahankaar (the ego) which generates five primitive elements (the earth, the fire, the air, the water and the ether), sense organs and motor organs.
3. Group of Tanmatras (the subtle forms of matter) that generate the five major elements, is the third creation.
4. Creation of organs that have the power of sensing and moving is the fourth creation.
5. Creation of the mind that governs the senses and was appeared from ego, is the fifth creation.
6. Appearance of mind and the illusions that misguide it, is the sixth creation.
7. The above mentioned six creations are known as natural creations also. Creatures other than these six have no power of knowledge, they can experience the touch only. These creatures like trees and other vegetables are known as the seventh creation.
8. Eighth creation is of the birds and animals.
9. Ninth creation is of those human beings who seek pleasure in action and luxuries which are infact the cause of sorrow.
10. Tenth creation is of the great sages like Sanatkumar etc. Thus at the beginning of the Kalp, God the creator used Rajogunas (royal virtues) to create himself in the form of the universe.

Maitreyaji says, " This whole creation is a manifestation of the plays of God. That omnipotent God created the universe just by His wish and for the sake of His play. For the extension of the creation, Lord Brahma wished and create four sons-Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatan and Sanatkumar.

Thereafter, with a desire to create world, Lord Brahma ordered them to produce population. But Lord Brahma's sons had no interest in wordily affairs. Lord Brahma therefore cursed them to remain in children's form for ever. Then from

Lord Brahma's eyebrows appeared a baby, blue-red in color. The baby appeared in eleven forms and began to cry immediately after his arrival. Lord Brahma consoled him! "Don't cry my son, you will be named as Rundra." So the eleven forms of the baby came to be known as eleven Rundras. Rundranis (female Rundra) were also created. From Tamas Prakriti (malignant nature) Rundra created the ghosts, the spooks, the spectres, the devils, lamias etc. Afraid by their appearances, Lord Brahma prayed Rudra, " O Mahadev, please stop creating such formidable organisms. They are already enough in number. Now, you please undertake penance to comfort all the creatures."

Thereafter, Lord Brahma created ten more sons-Marichi, Bhrigu, Kratu, Pulah, Pulatsya, Angira, Atri, Vashishtha, Daksh and Narad. Nine out of them took permission for the creation of their offsprings, but Narad accepted celibacy and resolved to preach Bhagwad bhakti (devotion for God.)

For the continuation of the creation, Lord himself appeared as a female from the left hand and as a male from the right hand of Lord Brahma. Those males and females forms were named Manu and Shatarupa respectively. They were the first in the whole creation to copulate and bring about sexual reproduction. They begot two sons- Priyvrat and Uttanapad, and three daughters- Devhuti, Akuti and Prasuti. As the primitive king, Manu was the fosterer of the earth. By then a demon named Hiranyaksh abducted the earth and hid it under the abyssimal depth of the ocean, causing worries for Lord Brahma. Instantly Lord appeared himself in Varah (boar) incarnation and to do away with Lord Brahma's worries, He at once entered the depth of the ocean and rescued the earth on His long teeth. On the way the Lord had an encounter with Hiranyaksh and killed the demon with His wheel.

Maitreya: says Hiranyaksh represented anger. Those who don't want to discharge their duties, but still wish to live with all the comforts are abductors of others wealth. Such people, who continuously interfere with equal distribution of wealth, must be condemned as the demons.

On the origin of the demons, Maitreya cryptic said, once Diti, the wife Maharshi Kashyap, expressed her desire to conceive. Maharshi Kashyap tried to disuade her that time was not suitable for an auspicious job like conception. But Diti kept on insisting and forced her husband shamelessly to assist her in the process. Consequently she conceived during the dusk. Kashyapji cautioned her "you will give birth to the demons." And with the arrival of the demons in Diti's womb, nature began to manifest herself adversely.

There was terror and famine all around, and darkness prevailed even during day, with stars appearing in the sky. Frightened by these manifestations, the gods asked Lord Brahma about the reason of all those disturbances. Lord Brahma informed them that two dread demons were to take birth from Diti. Those two demons, told Lord Brahma, were the two gatekeepers– Jay-Vijay, of the Lord's abode. Once, Sanakadi Kumar had gone to Vaikunthdham (the abode

of God) to see God but those two gatekeepers didn't let them in. Sanakadi tried thrice, but only to be stymied every time by those two gatekeepers at the gates. Hence, Sanakadi Kumar cursed them to take birth on earth as demons. Those two gatekeepers of the God's abode Jay-Vijay appeared first as Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha, second time as Ravan and Kumbhkuran and third time as Duntvakra and Shishupal.

16.3.6 Sage Kardam

Continuing the process of creation, Brahma produced Sage Kardam from his shadow and asked him to observe penance first. Thereafter, Brahma dictated Kardam to acquire physical strength and the strength of his sense and undertake the process of creating his offsprings. As per his father's dictate, Kardam observed severe penance. Pleased by his selfless penance, God asked Kardam to seek a boon. Karadam said, "Lord all the things in the world are ephemeral; only you're eternal. It will be an abuse of the intelligence to beg for some ephemeral thing from an eternal God."

Overwhelmed by Kardam's plain words, God said in benediction 'On the third day from now you will be married to Devhuti, the daughter of Manu. Nine daughters will take birth in your home. I will myself appear as your son' Saying this, God disappeared. As per the boon Kardam got married to Devhuti, the daughter of Manu. Their formal marriage was the first of it's kind in the creation, adopted as a religiously accepted means for continuation of life. Donating their daughter Devhuti to the sage Kardam, Manu and Shatarupa returned to their abode. As Mata Parvati used to serve Lord Lord Shiva, similarly Devhuti served Kardam with dedication.

Once the sage Kardam noticed that Devhuti has aged and shriveled by harsh living. Pleased by her dedication, Kardam asked her to seek a boon. Devhuti only begged that there should never be any lethargy in any service on her part towards him. Pleased again by her pure feelings Kardam provided her with heavenly luxuries. Together they enjoyed those luxuries for many years during which nine daughters were born to them. All those daughters symbolised the Navadha Bhakti (nine kinds of devotion) and were married to nine Prajapatis like Marichi etc. Thus kala was married to Marichi, Anusuya to Atri, Shraddha to Angira, Havirbhu to Pulatsya, Gati to Pulah, Shanti to Atharva, Krita to Kratu, Khyati to Bhrigu and Arundhati was married to the sage Vashishtha.

16.3.7 Lord Kapil

Married life of Kardam and Devhuti is a lesson for all the civilized couples of the world. Abiding to the limits of human behaviour in married life is a guarantee for the wellbeing of the couple. Without religion and morality, a man is not more than an animal. Kardam and Devhuti followed strict rules to welcome the arrival of eternal God. Thus, in due time, God appeared as their son. With His arrival the gods showered flowers. Lord Brahma alongwith his sons welcomed the God and said 'O pious daughter of Manu, Shri Hari has arrived as your son. He will

destroy the lust, and illusion and will preach his own philosophy. He will be known in the world as Kapil.

ESH MANVITE GARBH PRAVISHTAH KAIV MARDANAH |
AVIDYA SANSHA YA GRANTHI CHHITVA GAMVICHARISHYATI ||
AYAM SIDDH GANADHISHAH SHANKHYACHARYOH SUSAMMATAH |
LOKE KAPIL ITYA KHYAM GANTATE KIRTI VARDHANAH ||

Worshiping the lord Kapil, sage Kardam said 'O lord, by your grace, I'm free now from all the three obligations and all my desires are now granted.' With these words, Kardam took to asceticism.

16.3.8 Lord Kapil Preaches Metaphysical Knowledge to Devhuti

Mata Devhuti prayed lord Kapil to preach the way for the benefaction of the soul, which is attached with ephimeral body. Lord said 'O mother, Adhayatma Yoga (spiritual conjugation) is the main way of benefaction for the human beings. With devotion for me, soul becomes self-knowing. Total devotion of the soul in my form and virtues and listening my tales, unmistakably show devotion. This leads to an inseparable rapport between my devotee and me. This is the greatest benefaction for the humans.

ETAVANEV LOKEASMIN PUNSAM NISHREY SODAYAH |
TIVREN BHAKTI YOGEN MANOMARYARPITAM STHIRAM ||

The world is like an ocean of death and I cause salvation of those who give up all their lusts and recite my name with fervent devotion. This whole nature has different forms, but it is ephimeral and constantly changing. It has twenty-four divisions-five major elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth); five souls (sound, touch, appearance, fluid and smell); five sense organs (eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin); five motor organs (mouth, hands, legs, penis and bones) and mind, intelligence, conscience and ego.

That omnipresent Purush (an epithet of God) voluntarily accepted Prakriti (an epithet for female force). From her various virtues, Prakriti created various creatures that corresponded exactly to the virtues that caused their creation. In the mess, the mantle that covered the knowledge also caused illusion for the Jivatma (microcosm of omnipotent spirit) which thus forgot his original appearance.

The creature then began to assume the nature as a reflection of his own appearance– though she is different from and opposite to him– and himself as the doer. Such an ego regarding ones duties leads to his entanglement in the cycles of life and death. Differentiating between the Prakriti and Purush and experiencing their real appearances respectively, introspecting sages have had a sight of the Supreme Being through their conscience and achieve the unparrlel Brahma Pada.
Lord Kapil says, "Through the union of the sperm and the ovum, the human

body appears as a lump in the womb. His body forms completely within six months. Sense organs develop thereafter. Twenty fifth element, the soul, then enters the human body. With that, the body begins to experience hunger and thirst. Then suffering with many kinds of desires, the microcosm prays me to save him from the tortures of staying in the womb. I present him with a sight of me in his heart.

It then takes birth because of my grace. But as soon as it appears on the earh the human being begins to forget me. Still, I present him with my sight for two to three months more, when he begins to laugh. But people arooound him think that he is laughing for his mother. Nobody reminds him of me in his childhood. Youth of a human being passes in futile activities. In old age, his organs begin to fail and a human being finds himself unable to recite my name. Thus, the whole life of a human being just passes in the illusion of 'I', 'me' and 'my' and he reaches his last stage, and begins to realize his mistake. But then it is usually too late for him to do anything for his benefaction. If he has done any good deed in life, he may meet fortune, but without a devotion for me, no one can be happy. Only when the soul comes in my refuge, he gets free from the bondages of life and death.

Maitre says, O Vidur, thereafter Devhuti concentrated her mind in the divine appearance of Shri Hari, as presented by Lord Kapil. At once, she got free from all the sufferings. She got a sight of God in her conscience and her body transformed into a holy river. The place where Mata Devhuti received salvation is still known as Siddhi Pada. It is a renowned place of pilgrimage.

16.4 Chapter 4

This chapter contains 5 sub-sections.

16.4.1 Description of the Clans of Manu’s Daughters

Maitrey then related the description of the Manu's daughters. Manu and Shatarupa had three daughters- Akuti, Devhuti and Prasuti. Akuti was married to a Prajapati named Ruchi. They begot two children– a son and a daughter. The son later on came to be known as Yagyavatar of Lord Narayana, while the daughter was named Dakshina. In due course, Yagya and Dakshina begot twelve sons- Tosh , Pratosh, Santosh, Bhadra, Shanti, Indrapati, Idhm, Kavi, Vibhu, Swanh, Sudev and Rochan.

Manu's second daughter Devhuti was married to the sage Kardam. They begot nine daughters who were married, in due course to nine Prajapatis. One of them, named Kala, was married to the sage Marichi. They begot Kashyap and Purnima. Their offsprings comprise today's population of the entire world. Gati was the wife of Pulah. They begot three sons Karmshreshtha, Variyan and Sahishnu.

Pleased by the penance of Ansuya and Atri, the Tridevas (trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Lord Shiva) sent their parts as the sons to the hermit couple. Among

them Chandrama appeared from Brahma's part, Dattatreya from Vishnus part and sage Durvasa appeared from Lord Shiva's part.

To Shardha and Angira were born four daughters- Simivali, Kuhu, Raka and Anumati. They begot two sons also- Utathya and Brihaspati. Havirbhu was married to Pulastya. They begot two sons- Agastya and Vishrava. In later course, sage Vishrava produced Yakshraj Kuber from Idvida, while his second wife Keshini gave birth to Ravan, Kumbhkaran and Vibhishan.

Vashishth and his wife Arundhati begot seven Bramarishis like Chitraketu. Sage Atharva and his wife Chitti begot a son Taponishth. Geat sage Bhrigu and his wife Khyati begot two sons- Dhata and Vidhata, and a daughter- Shri.

Manu's third daughter Prasuti was married to Daksh, the son of Lord Brahma. She got sixteen daughters. Daksh married thirteen of them to Dharm. Of the remaining three daughters, one was married to Agni, one to Pitrgana and one to Lord Lord Shiva. Shraddha, Maitri, Daya, Shanti, Tushti, Pushti, Kriya, Unnati, Buddhi, Medha, Titiksha, Hree and Murti are the wives of Dharma. Of these Murti begot the sages Nar-Narayan. Swaha the wife of Agni begot three sons- Pavak, Pawaman and Shuchi. Two daughters were born to Swadha the wife of Pitrganas. They were named Dharini and Vayuna. These both daughters were Brahma vadinis (expounders of vedas.) Sati, the youngest daughter of Daksh and wife of Mahadev, however could not begot any offspring because she had committed immolation in her youth as a protest against her father's misbehaviour with her husband Mahadev.

16.4.2 Misbehavior of Dakshaprajapati with Lord Shiva

Vidur asked Maitrey: 'Lord Shiva is an idol of peace. He has no enemity with anyone. He is self indulgent Why did then Daksh Prajapati misbehave with Him? Maitrey said, " Once a meeting of Brahmavadis (expounders of vedas) was organized. Alongwith all the gods Lord Shiva and Brahma were also present in the meeting. Because of being a Prajapati, Daksh was allowed a late entry in the meeting. Moreover, when Daksh did arrive, all the gods, except Brahma and Lord Shiva, stood up to pay him regards. Honor by thousands of gods did not please Daksh as much as he felt insulted the by behaviour of Lord Shiva.

Brahma was the father of Daksh, so he didn't mind his behaviour. But seeing Lord Shiva sitting there and not paying due respect to him, Daksh got angry. He said, "He is like my disciple. I've married my daughter to him but he is uncourteous and irreligious. I committed a blunder by marrying my daughter to him. He smears ashes of pyre and roams at the cremation sites. Only the ghosts are his companions." Thus, Daksh cursed Lord Shiva. "May this Lord Shiva not get his due share alongwith the Gods in oblations."

Nandi, the prominent among Lord Shiva's servers, cursed Daksh in retaliation: "May the unwise Daksh lose his mind and be like an animal always bound to a woman." Thereafter indignant Lord Shiva at once left the meeting alongwith his

followers. But still Daksh didn't put the matter at rest. To behumble Lord Shiva,he organised a grand yagya named Barhaspati. All the Brahmarishis, devarishis, pitars, gods etc. attended the yagya alongwith their wives.

From her abode on Kailash, Sati saw all the gods going through air to the grand occasion. She also learned about the grand yagya organised by her father Daksh. Out of curiosity, she insisted her husband Lord Lord Shiva, "O Vamdev, your father-in-law, Daksh Prajapati has organised a grand feast. If you wish, should we also go there to attend the feast. I desire to see my beloved mother, sisters, and other relatives." Lord Shiva replied! "O beautiful, though one may go without invitation to his parents' home, may visit teachers and siblings. But your father resents me. So it is not good if we go there uninvited. I will not tolerate if he humiliates you. So, you should not go there, because a humiliation by a near one may cause immediate death.'

In fact, Sati had a logical mind, while Lord Shiva gave more weightage to faith than logic.
Sati even had a doubt regarding God's incarnation as Lord Rama, that how could Parbrahma Parmatma, who is the father of all, be a son of any human being. Moreover, how could the Supreme Being be in so much sorrow because of his wife's separation. Lord Shiva and Sati, therefore, had a sight of Lord Rama in exile. Lord Shiva silently saluted Lord Rama's appearance, while Sati decided to give Rama a test. So taking a guise of Sita, Sati appeared before Rama. Lord Rama knew everything so he regarded her as Sati. He also showed her some of His glories.
Now Sati had firm belief in Lord Rama. She returned to Lord Shiva and gave her verdict that Lord Rama was indeed an incarnation of supreme Being. But Lord Shiva was much disturbed by Sati because of her taking the guise of Sita.

Lord Shiva had, therefore, acquired an indifferent stance towards Sati. Thus she was feeling anguished by Lord Shiva's behaviour. Hence she prayed silently: 'O Lord, may my body be destroyed soon, as this body is not able to serve Lord Shiva'

Hence, when she heard about the grand feast organised by her father, in abject violation of her husband's dictate, Sati got ready to attend the feast. Lord Shiva too sent her with a lot of gifts and servants. There at Daksh's palace Sati found that all were ignoring her because of her father's fear.Even her sisters laughed at her for coming alone. In all, Sati found nothing favourable in her father's home. Only her mother welcomed her that too in isolation. Indignant, Sati went straight to the Yagya Mandap (canopy for performing oblation) and found that no seat had been allotted there for Lord Shiva.

With anger she said; 'Even the mere name of Lord Shiva is enough to destroy all the sins of the humans. No one can violate His dictate. And you, O father, feel jealous of such an auspicious figure, holy, Lord Lord Shiva, who is soul of every living being. I am ashamed of having this body produced from an opponent of

Lord Shiva, like you.' Saying these words, Sati threw herself in the flames of Yagyagni(the fire of the Yagya) Thereafter, Lord Shiva's ganas (servers) destroyed the Yagya. They beheaded Daksh and dropped his head in the altar. Other gods and the sages were also punished for showing disrespect for Lord Shiva. Ultimately, Lord Brahma, accompanied by the gods, went to Kailash and pacified Lord Lord Shiva. Ashutosh Lord Shiva granted them a boon to carry the Yagya to completion.

In her next birth, Sati was born in the home of Himalayas. She was named as Parvati. Sober, cool, and an idol of faith, Mata Parvati dedicated herself fully to Lord Lord Shiva. Narad gave her a talisman to get Lord Shiva as her husband. Lord Narayan himself requested Lord Shiva to accept Parvati as his wife. Lord Shiva accepted to get married with Parvati. Thus, through hard penance, Mata Parvati got Lord Shiva as her husband. In due course the auspicious marriage of Mata Parvati with Lord Shiva took place.

16.4.3 Tale of Dhruv

The self-begotten Manu had two sons- Priyvrat and Uttanpad. King Uttanpad had two queens- Suniti and Suruchi. Uttanpad loved Suruchi more than he loved Suniti. So Suniti was forced to live outside the royal palace with her son Dhruv, while Suruchi and her son Uttam enjoyed all the luxuries in the palace. Once the King was playing with his soon Uttam who was siting in his lap. Meanwhile, Dhruv too arrived there and began insisting to sit in his father's lap. But for the fear of Suruchi the king did not take Dhruv in his lap. Just then, Suruchi too arrived there. Strutting at her fortune, she ridiculed Dhruv: 'Though you are also a son of the king, but you have no right to sit on the throne because you are not borne to me. You are the son of queen Suniti who is neglected by the King, and now lives like a mistress. So your desire is hard to accomplish. Even then if you wish to have the throne, you begin to worship Lord Narayana, and take birth through me by His grace and then wait for your chance to sit in the King's lap.'

Hurt by his stepmother's harsh words, Dhruv came to his mother crying. When Suniti heard about the incidence, she felt very sorry. Still, with patience she consoled her son Dhruv, 'O my son, don't wish ill for the others. Those who cause sorrow for others, have to face the outcome themselves one day. Your stepmother is right. You have been born to me. Even then, if you wish to be enthroned like the prince Uttam, give up your jealousy and start worshipping Lord Narayan. Even you're grand father Manu and great grand father Lord Brahma worshipped him. Only Lord Narayan can remove your sorrow.'

Mother's words shook the conscience of Dhruv. He at once set out with firm determination to please Shri Hari by penance. Leaving the town, while going in search of solitude he met devarshi Narad in the way. Dhruv respectfully greeted Narad. Narad lovingly caressed his head and tried to test his determination. Narad tried everything to convince Dhruv to send him back to his home, but he failed to shake the firm determination of the boy. Then with kindness, Narad preached Dhruv about Lord's appearance and gave him a mantra.

Thus, Naradji performed his duty as Guru and blessing Dhruv, he disappeared. Dhruv arrived in Madhuvan and took a seat under a Kadamb (Cadamba) tree on the bank of the river Yamuna. There he began to recite the mantra and meditation. During the first month he ate roots and tubers. In the second month he ate dried leaves. During the third month he managed with Yamuna's water. During the fourth month he sustained himself on the air only. Dhruv even stopped breathing. Now, standing on one leg only, he was fully concentrated in Lord Vasudev. At the moment when Dhruv stopped breathing and concentrated in Parbrahma, all the three worlds shook with fear.

All the gods ran to the refuge of Lord. Because of stopping of breath all the organisms stood still.Assuring them not to be afraid, Lord arrived in Madhuvan to see His beloved devotee Dhruv. Seeing the Lord Himself arrived before him, Dhruv's eyes filled with tears. He said, " O Lord, I don't know how to worship you." Lord touched his cheek with His conch. With that, Dhruv came to realize the glory of God. With complete devotion and folded hands, he worshiped Shri Hari: "I salute to such an omnipotent, omnipresent and all knowing Lord, whose power is present in everybody, and who entering my heart revived my speech." Pleased by his prayer Lord stroked Dhruv's head and said, " Your desire shall materialize. After enjoying your kingdom, you shall come to my abode which is far above the Saptrishis?

Then by God's permission, Dhruv returned to his father's palace. There he was given a grand welcome. Everyone wants to be kind with the one who has God's grace, his father handed him the kingdom of the entire earth. His brother, Uttam had gone to the forest for hunting where the Yakshas killed him. Indignant by his brother's death, Dhruv at once launched an attack on the Yakshas. But his grandfather consoled him that the devotees of God don't long for revenge. Thereafter Dhruv ruled the earth for a period of thirty-six thousand years. Even death bowed before him. Indeed, the devotees of God have no fear of death. The death fears them on the contrary.

16.4.4 Tale of Prithu

In the lineage of the king Dhruv, had occurred a king named Anga. Anga's wife was Sumita, who was the daughter of Mrityadev. They had a son named Ven who was evil in nature. When he grew up and occupied the throne, he became a very cruel ruler. Day by day his atrocites increased. Then he began to openly insult the greatmen. When his atrocities became uncontrollable, sages killed him by their curse to salve the people.

Thereafter, the sages churned Ven's dead body and produced a couple- a man and a woman. The man was born by the world-preserving part of Lord Vishnu. He came to be known as Prithu. He got an extremely pretty wife Archi. Prithu was the Acharya (master) of Lord Archan Bhakti. With his occupying the throne, the subjects became religious, happy and moral-abiding people. Everything was going well in his kingdom, when one day the farmers approached him and

complained, "O king, the earth has grown rude. She does not give us cereals, even though we sow a lot of seeds in every season. She eats them all." King Prithu set out at once to chastise the earth who ran in the form of a cow to save herself. Scolding at her king Prithu said, "O Vasudhu (earth) I will kill you. You have violated my rule." The earth then came to his shelter and begged for pardon. " O king it is not my fault my fertility has ended because of the sins of the king Ven. Now, I'm present before you in the form of a cow. Now, you please exploit me fully to make everybody happy."

King Prithu resolved then and there to perform a hundred Ashvmedh Yagyas. His ninety-nine Yagyas completed unabatedly. But during the hundredth Yagya, Indra kidnapped the horse deceitfully. Indra had himself performed one-hundred Ashvmedh Yagyas. He could not tolerate anybody equaling him, for then the performer would have equal claim on Indraasana (the seat of Indra.)

Prithu's son was Vijitashva. He had seen Indra stealing the horse deceitfully. He even chased Indra for some distance, but Indra transformed himself into a hermit. Somehow, the oblation completed, and God appeared and asked the king to seek a Boon. King Prithu begged, " O Lord, my soul remains unsatiated by your tales. So if you are pleased with me, kindly give me a hearing equal to the hearings of ten thousand ears."

Sanakadiks preached knowledge to the king Prithu. Thereafter, fostering his subjects religiously, king Prithu ruled the earth for thousand years. During the rule, king's popularity spread in leaps and bounds. At last he got the supreme position of god." Thus narrating the tale of Prithu, Maitrey says to Vidur: 'those who listen to this tale of Prithu, that shows the glory of God, get a strong affection for God and receive salvation ultimately, like Prithu.'

16.4.5 Fable of Puranjan

King Prithu's son was Vijitashu. In his lineage later on occurred a king named Prachin Barhi. King Prachin Barhi had many sons. All of them were known as Prachetas, they were all devotees of God and had been sunk in devotion since their childhood. Pleased by their devotion once Lord Shiva appeared before them. With simplicity, Prachetas asked, " O Lord of the lords, we have been worshipping Narayana, how did you arrive before us?"

Lord Shiva said, " Those who have devotion for Narayan, are also dear to me." Thereafter Lord Shiva gave them Rudra Geet which the Prachetas continued to sing for years immersed in the water.

King Prachinbarhi had a great interest in oblations that involved sacrifice. One-day devarshi Narad asked him, "What are you doing, O king?" Miseries don't end by action alone, nor does one get supreme joy. The animals which you have sacrificed for your oblations also feel the pain given by you. They are all waiting for you in the heaven. When you go there after death they will take revenge one by one." Frightened by these words, King Prachinbarhi took shelter at Narad and

said, " Devarshi, my mind is caught in the actions. You kindly show me the way to the supreme salvation."

At the request of the king, Narad narrated him the tale of Vigyat and Avigyat. At the behest of Avigyat, Vigyat migrated to and settled in a beautiful city. There he met the queen Puranjani and got married to her. He was so much indulged in sensual pleasures with Puranjani that he became a woman in the next birth. As a woman, Vigyat got married in due course, but was widowed soon. She wanted to commit Sati (self-immolation) but people prevented her.

One-day she was travelling on an elephant, when she spotted some swans in the sky. She asked the mahout to look at them. As soon as the mahout's attention diverted, the elephant got out of control and both of them fell on the ground and died. As she was looking at the swans at her last time, she became a swan in her next birth. As a swan she reached the lake Manasarovar, where she met her old friend Avigyat who consoled the swan. "You are neither a man nor a woman, We are both swans now. You are same as me, no different from me. It means that there is no difference between the living beings and the God. There is only one soul. It's because of non-knowledge that one sees the God and the living beings differently." Thus cautioned by his friend Avigyat, Vigyat realized and accepted his incarnation as a swan.

But, the king Prachinbarhi didn't get the meaning of the spiritual tale. Narad then revealed. "God is Avigyat while microcosm is Vigyat. Avigyat has established eighty-four lakhs cities and asked Vigyat to select any one of them. After sorting lakhs of cities the microcosm selects a city like the human body. That city has a lake in the center-the belly from where the whole city is controlled. Again it has nine gates-two eyes, two nostrils, one mouth, two ears, one reproductive organ and one anus. It is such a highway, treading which no one returns. It has two courtiers- mind and ego. The living being passes his life caught between them.

Queen Puranjani is the intellect in this body. Because of this intellect or non-knowledge the living being or microcosm begins to feel in terms of 'I', 'My' and 'Me' for his body and organs. All the ten organs are his friends, through which the living being experiences the sensation and performs action. Inclinations of the organs are his friends. All the five Pranas (breaths) are the five-hooded serpent that guards the body. Old age is Kaal Kanya who launches an attack on the city (human body). Shoka and Moha (sorrow and attachment) are the two brothers of Kaal Kanya. Kaal Kanya is married to Chandveg who is also known as Varsh (year). It has three hundered and sixty Gandharvas (the days of the year). Twelve months are his twelve commanders and seven days are the ministers. They all together plunder the human body like the city of Puranjan. Thus, covered by Agyan (non-knowledge), the living being, which has a great pride on his body, virtually wastes his life suffering different kinds of pains.

From this mystical preaching Prachinbarhis inclination for Vedic Karmkands

(action) and temptation for mundane luxuries were removed. By the grace of Devarshi Narad, the king got a perception of God and living being. He at once abdicated his attachment for the body and concentrated his mind in God.

16.5Chapter 5

This chapter contains 3 sub-sections.

16.5.1 Tale of Priyvrata

Hearing the tale of Prachetas' devotion and receiving God's grace by them, a curiosity arose in the mind of the king Parikshit about self-knowledge and Grihasth Dharm (duties of a married person). He asked Shukdev, "O Brahmin, Priyvrat was a supreme devotee and self-indulgent. Why did he then live in Grihasthi (married life)? Married life is binding from all sides. Greatmen never long for married life. Even then the king Priyurata lived a married life yet he regularly prayed to God. This is an intriguing subject for me, kindly remove my doubts.

Seeing Parikshit's curiosity and doubts, Shri Shukdev said, "O king you are right that once receiving God's grace one can't leave it. No attachment, no love remains in him for life. The prince Priyurata was a great devotee of God (Bhagwad Bhakt). By the grace of Narad he had instinctively become aware of Parmarth tatva (knowledge that leads to salvation). He had dedicated all his actions into the feet of Lord Vasudev. Thus, an intense inclination for detachment developed in Priyvrata since his childhood. So, Lord Brahma tried to admonish him. "Son, you are too young yet to be an ascetic. Since the moment you've acquired the human body, enemies like Kama (sex), Krodh (anger) Moha (affection), Lobh (greed), Mada (ego), Matsar (jealousy) etc. have been continuously chasing it. We're all bound to follow the path laid down by God. We should serve Him by our action, accepting our body, which the God has given to us and the merits associated with it. Hence, you first enjoy the luxuries given by God, thereafter you will be free to do what you wish."

Thus, as per the dictate of Lord Brahma, the king Priyvrata accepted two wives. His first wife was Prajapati Vishwkarma's daughter Barhismati. She begot ten sons- Agnidhra, Idhmjihv, Yagyabahu, Mahavir, Miranyreta, Savan, Medhatithi, Dhriprishth, Vitihotra and Kavi. Priyvrat's second wife begot three sons- Uttam, Raiwat and Tamas. Out of these ten sons, three became celibate. All the three sons from the second wife became the lords of different Manvantaras. Despite leading married life, the king remained an ascetic. In his chariot, he travelled around the land and divided it into seven parts and appointed each of his seven sons as the lord of one island. Agnidhra, the eldest son was given Jambu Dweep. He was married to an elf Purvchitti. She had begotten nine sons who became the ruler of the nine parts of Jambu Dweep. Merudevi was the wife of Agnidhra's eldest son Nabhi. As a gift of Yagya, Lord had taken an incarnation in his home. That incarnation of Lord is known as Rishabhdev.

16.5.2 Tale of Bharat

Rishabhdev was married to Jayanti, the daughter of Indra. Jayanti gave birth to one hundred sons. Bharat was the eldest among them. The youngest nine sons became Yogeshwars. Eighty-one sons accepted Brahaminism. Remaining nine brothers followed their elder brother Bharat. One day Rishabhdev called a meeting of his sons and preached them about the well being of human beings. "Sons" he said, "Never misuse this human body. You have got this human life by great luck and God's grace. He does not deserve to be called as a friend, teacher or father who does not preach his friend, disciple or son about the welfare of the self." Preaching that Rishabhdev enthroned Bharat and himself departed for his supreme abode.

The king Bharat was a great devotee. By his father's permission he had married to Panchjam, the daughter of Vishurupa. They begot five sons. Bharat dedicated his religious actions to Lord Vasudev. Thus by the purification of his actions, his conscience was also purified. So he transferred the kingdom to his son and himself took an abode in Pulahashram (hermitage of Pulah) on the banks of the river Gandaki. There he passed his time in the worship of God.

One fine morning, when he was performing libations in the river, a pregnant Doe arrived on the opposite bank to drink water. At that time a lion roared somewhere in the forest behind her. Frightened by the roar, the doe jumped into the river to save her life. But the doe lost her life in the action while her foetus fell in the river.

Feeling pity for the fawn, Rajarshi Bharat took it and began to foster it. Day by day Bharat's affection grew for the fawn. Slowly he became irregular in his daily routine. But Bharat loved the fawn more than his routine. When the fawn grew into a deer, by its natural instinct it joined its mates. On his return, Bharat did not find the deer and grew so restless that he died out of depression. As his mind was fixed on the deer at death, he was born in his next birth as a deer. Bharat was a prudent man. But affection did not spare even him.

What would be the fate of common people then? They are easy targets of the feelings and are more vulnerable to fall prey to attachment and affection. When a derangement occurs in the intellect of man, he begins to conduct irreligiously, but thinks that his behaviour is religious. Realizing his mistake, Bharat as a deer, came to his hermitage and once again began his penance before God. Even in deer incarnation Bharat had a strong feeling of detachment.

When Bharat's deer incarnation ended, he took his next birth in a Brahmin's home. Sometime after the birth, his mother died. By God's grace Bharat had remembrance of his previous birth. So he always remained immersed in reflection on Hari (God.).To avoid attention he posed himself as an insane stupid, blind and deaf person. Even his brothers neglected him seeing his inertia. Now he was free to wander at will. He was satisfied with what he got

and doing menial jobs.

During that period, a thief, who had no son, wanted to offer a human-sacrifice to Bhadrakali in desire of a son. Searching a right person for the sacrifice, his men found and caught Jadabharat (In Brahmin incarnation, Bharat was known by this name because of his inactivity), who was guarding his farms then. Jada Bharat remained quite indifferent and did not even resist his kidnapping. The thieves took him into the temple. There as soon as the chief of the thieves raised his sword to kill Jada Bharat, Bhadrakali appeared from the idol and beheaded all the thieves. It shows that one has to bear the fruit himself of the crime committed. But Jada Bharat did not experience this and remained quite unmoved as before.

In another incidence, the king Rahugana of Sindhu was riding a palanquin to the hermitage of the sage Kapil. On the way, he fell short for one Kahar(carrier of the palanquin). His men found Jada Bharat who was wandering nearby and yoked him also in carrying the palanquin. Jada Bharat was walking cautiously so as not to tread on even little creatures. Hence, the king was getting jerks and a bumpy ride. He scolded at the Kahars. The Kahars informed him that the new recruit was causing him those jerks. The king Rahungana then scolded at Jada Bharat. "Hey, are you so frail that you can't balance the palanquin properly. Don't you know that your master is riding in it? Wait, I'll teach you a lesson."

Jada Bharat stood fearlessly. The king was stunned to see him. It was then that Jada Bharat opened his mouth to utter is first words. He felt that he had carried the king on his shoulders, and though the king was a haughty man, '...but my life will be a sheer wastage if I don't preach the king a way to salvation...' So with a desire of benefiting the king Jada Bharat said, " O king, life and death, strength and weakness are the virtues of the body. But the soul is sinless. I have put all my burden on the shoulders of the God. You too have great burden on your head. Lord of everyone is one. Even your senses are not in your control how then will you control your subjects? O king only knowledge is the form of the soul. By knowledge alone you can recognize the soul. Union with one homogenous and holy Supreme Being is the true introspection. But as long as you don't bear the dust of great men's feet on your head, you will not recognize the God.

Hearing these words, the king Rahungana fell at the feet of Jada Bharat and begged his pardon. Jada Bharat then preached the king about the metaphysical knowledge. "Listening to the tales of the God continuously is the only way to concentrate one's mind in Shri Hari. In my previous birth. I was the king of Bharatvarsh. But because of my attachment for a deer, I was deviated from the path of supreme knowledge. Hence, I had to take birth in deer form. But by the grace of Lord Krishna, memory of my previous birth persisted in a deer incarnation also. So in my present birth I prefer to stay away from the people and wander secretly. So, from now on drop your attachments and start reciting God's name. By the virtues of His tale alone you will easily get Him. O King, the

body is like a merchant, who is roaming on the earth borrowing this wealth of age. It has lost its wealth in useless worldly affairs. One-day arrow of the Kaal will snatch everything from it. So, the human being must utilise their invaluable moments in the training of the supreme knowledge."

16.5.3 Description of the Extent of the Landmass

Hearing the tale of the king Priyvrat's lineage, Parikshit asked Shukdev: "O great sage, what is the expanse of the landmass? I wish to hear a description of it alongwith it's islands, because this world is a tangible idol of God alongwith his virtues. Hence, knowing it intangible, infinitesimal form of God can also be known.'

Shukdev said: 'O King, illusions created by God are so vast that nobody can find their end. Therefore, I will describe main features of the world with the help of name, appearance, extent and symptoms. King Priyvrata has divided the earth into seven islands. These islands are: (1)Jambudweep, (2)Plukshdweep, (3)Shalmalidweep(4)Kushdweep, (5)Kronchdweep, (6)Shakdweep and (7)Pushkardweep. All these islands are surrounded by seven seas, which comprise of saline water, sugarcane juices, and wine, ghee, milk, whay and sweet water respectively. Extent of each island is double than that of it's preceding one.

Jambudweep: - Shukdev says, 'Situated in the centre of the world is Jambudweep. It has an extent of one lakh Yojan. It has a round shape like a lotus leaf. It has nine zones each with an extent of nine thousand Yojan. These zones are called Varsh. Eight mountain ranges mark the boundaries of these Varsh which are arranged in circular fashion. At the centre of the Varsh, is the tenth Varsh named Illavrit. In the center of Illavrit is Meru. Names of other nine Varsh are - Kinpurush, Harivarsh, Kamyak, Hiranmaya, Kuru, Bhadrashwa, Ketumal and Bharat. Such as the mount Meru is surrounded by Jamudweep, similarly Jamudweep is surrounded by a vast sea. Because of a majority of Jamun (black berry) trees, this island is named as Jambudweep.

Plukshdweep: - As there is a huge Jamun (black berry) tree that is eleven hundred Yojan high in Jambhudweep, similarly there are innumerable Pluksh (Pakur-Ficus pinctoria) trees in Plukshdweep hence it's name. Agni (fire) is the venerable God in this island. Priyvrata's son, King Idhmjihv was the ruler of this island. He divided it into seven parts and made his seven sons the ruler of these divisions. These seven divisions were named- Shiv, Yavas, Subhadra, Shant, Kshem, Amrit and Abhay. These divisions have seven mountains, and seven rivers. Plukshdweep has an extent of two lakh Yojans. It is surrounded by an ocean of sugarcane juice.

Shalmalidweep: - Just double in extent than Plukshddweep, is Shalmalidweep. It has a majority of Shalmali (silk cotton) trees, which comprise the abode of Garud, the King of the birds. Priyvrata's son Yagyabahu was the ruler of this island. He too made seven divisions in the island as per his sons- Surocham,

Devvarsh, Paribhadra, Ramanak, Saumanasya, Apyayan and Avigyat. This island too has seven mountains and seven rivers. Four classes of people inhabite this island. They worship Vedmay Chandrama (the moon with vedas) This island is surrounded by a sea of wine.

Kushdweep: - This island is surrounded by a sea of the Ghee. It has an extent of eight Yojans, and a majority of Kush shrubs. From the light of their tips, Kush shrubs illuminate this island. Priyvrata's son Hiranyarata was the ruler of this island. Dividing the island into seven divisions, he too appointed his seven sons as the ruler of each of these divisions. These divisions are- Vasu, Vasuddana, Drirhruchi, Nabhigupta, Stutyavrata, Vivikt and Vamaddev. People of Kushdweep worship the fire.

Kraunchdweep: - With an extent of sixteen lakh Yojan, Kraunchdweep is surrounded by the sea of milk. There is a gigantic mountain named Kraunch on the dweep. After this mountain the island is known as Kraunchdweep. Priyvrata's son, King Ghritprishtha was the ruler of this island. He too divided the island into seven divisions and distributed them between his seven sons, one to each son. The names of these seven sons are- Aam, Madhuruh, Meghprishth, Sudhama, Mrajishth, Lohitarn and Vanaspati. Inhabitants of the island worship Varundev (Neptune) the lord of water.

Shakadweep: - Surrounded by the sea of whey is Shakadweep with an extent of thirty-two lakh Yojans. It has a huge tree of Shaka, hence its name. With a sweet fragrance of this tree, the whole island emits a pleasant scent. The ruler of this island, Medhatithi was also a son of Priyvrata. He too had seven sons- Purojav, Manojav, Pawamana, Dhumranik, Chitraref, Bahurup and Vishwdhar. They were made the rulers of the seven divisions of the island. People of the island use Pranayama to weaken their Rajoguna and Tamoguna, and worship Hari (Vishnu) in Vayu(form) through meditation.

Pushkardweep: - Pushkardweep has an extent of sixty-four Yojans. It is surrounded by a sea of sweet water. There is present a huge lotus flower with a million, golden petals. This lotus is regarded as a seat of Brahma. Priyvrata's son Vitihotra was the ruler of this island. He divided the island into two divisions, and made his sons Ramanak and Dhataki the rulers of these divisions. Inhabitants of this island worship Brahma appearance of Shrihari (Vishnu).

16.6 Chapter 6

This chapter contains 7 sub-sections.

16.6.1 Tale of Ajamil

The king Parikshit requested Shukdev, "O preacher, so far you have related about the way how to overcome attachment for wordily things. Inadvertently, the lliving beings commit some kinds of sins or crimes. O great soul, now kindly tell me the way by which humans can get rid themselves of the tortures, they are supposed to be subjected to in the hells."

Shukdev said, "A sinner is sure to be tortured in hell, unless and until he had observed penance for his sins in his present birth. But even penance is no guarantee of his salvation if the person indulges again in sins thereafter. It is all because of ignorance, that desires to commit sin does not end. Spiritual ways are, thereafter necessary. Adopting spiritual ways like penance, celibacy, tranquility, self-restraint, abdication, truthfulness, holiness, restraint of passions and discipline, even the most serious sins are destroyed. Alternatively, taking refuge at the God or developing a devotion for Him, all the sins can be destroyed. O Parikshit, such a sanctification of the sinner as achieved by dedication to God, is rare even by observing penance."

Shukdev narrated the tale that was once related by Muni Agastya. In the town of Kannauj, lived a Brahmin named Ajamil. He had married to his mistress. Being with an unchaste woman his Brahminical virtues had been destroyed. Now, Ajamil earned his living not by performing holy tasks, but instead he restored to petty tricks like plundering, deceiving and even killing people to feed his family.

Once, a group of Mahatmas(ascetics)came to the town. People greeted and offered them with edible items. But,the ascetics refused to accept anything. They said that they would accept the food only from the household where holy food is cooked for the Lord. Irritated people showed the ascetics the way to Ajamil's home. From Ajamil, the ascetics accepted the alms and themselves cooked the food, and offered it to God and ate themselves. Now the heart of Ajamil and his wife were filled with expiation.

The ascetics wished to cause some benefit for Ajamil. They said to him, "If you get a son now, please name him Narayana. Ascetics words did materialize and Ajamil got one more son, the tenth one. As per ascetics advice, Ajamil named him Narayana. Being the youngest son, Narayana was very dear to Ajamil. He used to remember Narayana always. Everything was passing as usual, when the time of Ajamil's departure arrived suddenly one day. Yamadutas (agents of Yama-the God of death) began to take him for his last journey. Not seeing his youngest son Narayana before him, Ajamil began to call out loudly: 'Narayana-Narayana.'

Hearing the calls, servers of Lord Vishnu too arrived their and challenged Yamadutas. The frightened Yamadutas said, " We are the servants of Dharmraj. Why are you stopping us?" Servers of Lord Vishnu said, "If you are the servants of Dharmaraj define Dharma (religion) then." Yamadutas said, "Actions dictated by Vedas are Dharma (religion) in true sense, and the actions forbidden by Vedas are Adharma (irreligious) and Veda is Narayana Himself."

The servers said, "You're unaware of Param Dharma (Supreme religion). This sinner has called out the name of God, so his sins, from the past crores of births, have been washed away. Now he is no more a sinner. Wise men say that recitation of God's name by any means- as a name of someone else, in derision or derogation- automatically does away with all the sins. This is the bounty of

God's name that a mere remembrance of it- whether wittingly or unwittingly, does destroy all sins." Hearing this dialogue, Ajamil awakened, as if from a long slumber.

Yamdutas had returned to Yamaloka by then. But, the abject sinner Ajamil had recovered from the snare of death. Without losing a moment, Ajamil went to the banks of the Ganges. There, drinking the holy water of the Ganges he left his body and went and found a place in Vaikunth Loka-the abode of Lord Vishnu.

16.6.2 Dialogue of Yama and Yamaduts

Shukdev says, "Parikshit, when the servers of Lord Vishnu failed the attempt of Yamadutas, they returned to Yamaloka and complained Yama about the event." "O Yamadev, we had so far known that you are the sole authority of punishing the people as per their deeds. No body had dared so far to violate your rule. But today those four servers of Lord Vishnu openly caused violation of your dictate." Yamaraja silently prayed Lord Vishnu and said, " Lord Narayana is the Lord of all living things. He is the Lord of me also, and I myself keep an account of the sins and pious deeds of the living beings by His order only. All the God's, Digpals (guardian of the direction), Shiv and Brahma etc. all of them follow His dictates.The greatest duty of all the living beings is that they should achieve a dedicated devotion for the Lord. Sons just look at the bounty of Lord that even the sinner like Ajamil escaped the noose of death simply by calling out the names of the God just once. So, from now on you never go near those people who are reciting Lord's name or are his devotees. Bring only the sinners to me."

16.6.3 Birth of Daksh from Prachetas

Shukdev says, "Ten sons of the King Prachinbarhi were known as Prachetas. They observed severe penance under the sea. When they re-emerged, Chandra (the moon-the ruler of the vegetation) calmed them and presented a beautiful daughter of the elf Prabhlocha, to them as their wife. From her, Prachetas begot prachetas Daksh. In due course the subject of Daksh spread all over the world and populated far off places. Daksh created, first of all the gods, the demons and the human beings who inhabited the heaven, the earth and the waters respectively.

But Daksh was not still satisfied. He therefore went to Vinddhyachal and started a severe penance there. Pleased by his penance God appeared before him. By the permission of God, Daksh Prajapati married with Ashinki the daughter of Panchama Prajapati. From Ashinki Daksh got ten thousand sons named Haryashva. In due course Daksh asked his sons to reproduce. But instead of reproducing they all reached Narayana Sarovar on the banks of the river Sindhu (Indus) to a place of Pilgrimage. Besalved by the preaching of Narad about Bhagwad Dharma. Daksh again produced one thousand sons named Shavlashva and asked them to reproduce. But they too followed the footsteps of their elder brothers, and took no interest in worldly affairs. Narad preached them also about Bhagwad Dharma.

When Daksh came to realize that Narad had converted his sons into ascetics by his preaching he angrily cursed Narad to be a wanderer for ever with nowhere a place to stay on. Narad accepted Daksha's curse and blessed him with a boon to have sixty daughters for the continuation of his subject. By the virtue of the boon, sixty daughters were born in the home of Daksh in due course. When they grew up, Daksh got ten of them married to Dharma. Then ten to Kashyap, twenty-seven to Chandrama, two to Angira and Krishashva each and remaining four daughters were married to a Kashyap named Tarkshya. The entire world came to be populated by the offsprings of these sixty daughters of Daksh.

Shukdev says, "Parikshit the names of Dharma's ten wives were Bhanu, Lamba, Kakubhi, Jami, Vishwas, Sadhya, Marutvati, Vasu, Muhurta and Sankalpa. Daksh's daughters Sarupa and Bhoota were the wives of Bhoot. Sarupa begot uncountable Rudragans, eleven of them are prominent. Bhoot's second wife Bhoota gave birth to formidable spooks and Ganas like Vinayak etc. Angira's first wife Swadha gave birth to pitragans while his second wife Sati accepted a Ved- Atharvanigra as her son. Krishashva's wife Archi begot Dhumrakesh, while Dhishana- Krishashva's second wife gave birth to four sons-Vedshira, Deval, Vayun and Manu. Kashyap named Tarkshya had four wives- Vinata, Kadru, Patangi and Yamini. Birds were born to Patangi, while Yamini gave birth to moths. Vinata's son is Garuda who is the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. Arun was her second son who became the charioteer of surya. Nagas (snakes) were born to Kadru.

Twenty-seven daughters of Daksh were married to Chandrama (the moon). These are the twenty-seven Nakshatras like Kritika etc. But Chandrama had particular love for Rohini, so he got tuberculosis and hence could not produce a child. Names of Kashyap's thirteen wives are Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kashtha, Ariha, Surasa, Illa, Muni, Krodh, Varsha, Tamra, Surabhi, Sarama and Timi. These are the mothers of the whole world. All the gods, demons, animals, giants etc. were born to them.

16.6.4 Insult of Brhaspati by the Gods

Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, Indra had become very haughty by the luxuries he received as the king of the gods. One day, Devraj Indra was sitting on his throne alongwith his queen Shachi. His court was full of courtiers. Forty-nine Marudganas, eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, Aditya, Ribhuganas Vishvedev, Shadhyaganas and both Ashwini Kumaras were present in the court. Groups of Siddhas, Charaus, Gandhavas, Vidyadhars, elves, Kinnars, Nagas etc. were singing in his praise and program of dance and music was on. Acharya Brihaspati, the revered teacher of the gods arrived there. But, despite having seen him, Indra did not show any respect for Brihaspati. Indignant Brihaspati he at once deserted Devaloka (the abode of the gods.)

When Acharya Brihaspati had gone, Indra realized his mistake. He at once launched an extensive search for Guru Brihaspati. But no one could locate Brihaspati. Feeling of insecurity in the absence of their Guru, strongly agitated

the gods. On the other hand, when the demons came to know about Brihaspati's missing, they began to intimidate the gods. By the permission of their teacher Shukracharya, the demons launched an attack on the Devloka. Feeling sad by the pitiable state of the gods.

Indra went to the refuge of the Brahma who told the gods that they were suffering because of their wrong policies and disregarding their learned Guru. Brahma also told the gods that the demons had strengthened their position because of their loyalty to their teacher Shukarcharya. Brahma advised the gods to request Vishwarup, the son of the sage Tvashta, to become their teacher. "He is a sound scholar of Vedas, great ascetic and abstentious person." "Serving him," Brahma said, "You will be free from all the crisis." Following Brahma's advice, the gods made Vishwarup their teacher by request. Ascetic Vishwarup used his Vaishnavi Vidya to annihilate the wealth and power of the demons and endowed Indra, with those powers. Vishwarup also preached Indra about the infallible Vaishnavi Vidya. Thus securing himself under the shield of this knowledge Indra defeated all the demonic forces.

16.6.5 Preaching of Narayana Kavach (shield) to Indra by Vishvarup

The king Parikshit asked, " O Lord, kindly relate to me the knowledge (Vaishnavi Vidya) by the power of which Devraj Indra easily defeated the demons."

Shukdev says, " Parikshit now I am telling you about the knowledge that was once taught to Indra by Vishwrup. So listen to it carefully with concentration. Whenever you feel yourself haunted with fears, you must guard you body with this Narayana Kavach (shield). But before that it is necessary to purify oneself by bath, meditation, libations, Pranayama (control of breaths) and eight-lettered and twelve-lettered mantras of God. The Hymnal Kavach (shield) must be then recited facing north while reflecting on the divine appearances of God.

May the God, who rides Guruda and holds conch, wheel, mace and lotus, protect me from all sides. May all the incarnations of God protect me from all the lusts, affection and desires and in all the circumstances. Thus may I be protected in water by Matsyavatar, on land by Vamanavatar, in sky by Trivikrama, from Kamapida (sexual desire)by Sanakadit, from Kupathya (diseases) by Dhanvantri, from ignorance from Vedvyas, from the hells by Kachchhap avatar (tortoise incarnation), in the war by Narsinha Avatar, in the way by Varah, on the top of the hills by Parashurama, during exile by Lord Rama along with Lakshmanaji, from Maranmohan Abhichar (death) by Lord Narayana, from ego by Nara, from obstacles by Dattatreya, from the bondage of actions by Kapila, from disregarding the God by Haygreev Mutri, from the crimes by Narad, from the imposters by Buddha and from the faults of Kali Kaal may I be protected by Kalkidev.

May I be protected in the morning with mace by Keshav, with flute by govind in the day, by Narayana Shakti before the noon and may I be protected with Sudarshan chakra by Lord Vishnu in the noon time. May the all knowing

omnipotent Lord protect me in every circumstances. May the name, appearance, vehicle, weapons, and all the services of Shri Hari protect my mind, intellect, organs and life from all the calamities. This Narayana Kavach (shield) saves one from all kind of calamities and fears.

16.6.6 Killing of Vishvarup, Defeat of the Gods and Construction of Vajra with the bones of Dadhichi

Vishrupa became the second Acharya (teacher) of the gods. He also saw over indulgence of Indra in luscious objects. Vishwarup's mother belonged to demon clan, so he had some inclination for the demons also. Stealthily, he supplied parts of offerings of the oblations to the demons. Very soon, Indra too came to learn that their teacher Vishvarup was stealthy nurturing their enemies, the demons. So, indignantly Indra severed the head of Vishvarup and to get rid of the sin of Brahmahatya (killing of Brahmin) Indra distributed his sin among the land, water, tree and the woman folk, and himself escaped the sin.

To take revenge of his son's murder, sage Tvashta organized a yagya with the purpose of having a son who could kill Indra. The Yagya finished successfully and as soon as the offering's ended, a formidable demon appeared from the altar. The demon was named Vritrasur. Very soon, Vritrasur defeated Indra and other gods and conquered all the three worlds. Terrorized by his power and gallantry, all the gods ran into the refuge of Lord Narayana. Pleased with their faith and prayers, Lord Narayana advised them to please the great sage Dadhichi and ask for his bones to build a Vajra (mace). From that Vajra Vritrasur could be killed, God assured them.

Thus, all the gods, headed by Indra, reached the hermitage of sage Dadhichi. There they very humbly and respectfully begged for his bones. For the benefit of the world, sage Dadhichi gladly accepted to donate his bones. With those bones, Vishvakarma built a massive Vajra which had thousand edges. Thus by the power of the Lord and aquiring a divine Vajra, Indra felt extremely strong. He at once launched an attack on the demon's armies and drove them away from the battlefield.

16.6.7 Killings of Vritrasur by Indra

Shri Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, from the gallantry of the gods the demon army began to fled. Seeing his army running away in panic, Vritrasur got infuriated. Charging ahead he stopped the gods' army from advancing. He roared loudly. Many of the gods fainted from the frightening thunder of the roar. Advancing Vritrasur routed the fallen fighters. Even the earth began to shake because of his momentum. Devaraj Indra could not bear it. He made a powerful blow on Vritrasur with his mace. Vritrasur held his mace in the way and hit Airavat, Indra's elephant, with it. Feeling the pain of the blow, Airavat moved back. Then Vritrasur scolded Indra who had killed Vishvarupa the brother of Vritasur, "O Indra, you have killed my brother Vishvarup without any reason. Now, I will gore you with my powerful trident. Or you may behead me by your vajra. Your vajra has the power of the sage Dadhichi and the glory of Shri Hari.

But, Indra with you vajra, I will get rid of the bondage's of my body and get salvation at the feet of Lord Vishnu. So,kill me with your vajra." Thus, even in the battlefield, Vritrasur experienced direct existence of God. He prayed God! " O Lord, may my mind reflect constantly on your auspicious virtues, may my voice always recite your virtues, may my body always be in your service. I don't want salvation without serving you. My mind is writhing for your sight." Shukdev says, " Thus, O Parikshit, Vritrasur had wished to leave his body in the battlefield and get the God. He did not want to enjoy the luxuries of the heaven defeating Indra."

Calling out these words, Vritrasar hit Indra with trident. But Indra cut that hand of Vritrasur, which was holding the trident, by his vajra. Losing his one hand Vritrasur was very outrageous and hit Indra's chin and Airavat's forehead with his elbow. Because of the blow Indra dropped his vajra, which fell near vritrasur's feet. Indra was now feeling too ashamed to pick up the vajra. Vritrasur said, " O Indra, pick up the vajra and kill your enemy. It is not the time to be gloomy. Indra showed his respect to Vritrasur for his truthfulness and undeceitful words, and said " O great demon you are really great. Your patience, determination and devotion for God are really remarkable. You have surmounted the illusion of God that confuses ordinary ones. You are a great man born in demon family. Vritrasur again raised his wheel to hit, but Indra cut his second hand.

Now, having lost both his hands, Vritasur shook the earth with his heavy steps and swallowed Indra along with his elephant. Everyone was beginning to feel sorry for Indra but because of Narayana Kavach, Indra remained unhurt even in the belly of Vritrasur. Thereafter, Indra lacerated the demon's belly and came out. Then he cut Vritrasur's head also. At that moment, soul of Vritrasur annihilated in the Supreme Being. All the gods then greeted Indra for his victory.

Vritrasur was a religious king Chitraketu in his previous birth. Because of the grace of Narad and Angira, he had received detachment and supreme devotion and began to roam everywhere as a Siddhapurush (one who achieves perfection). Once he was travelling on the aircraft gifted to him by the gods, he saw the Ardhnarishwar (half male-half female) appearance of Lord Shiva and said something in derogation. Indignant of his discourtesy, Mata Parvati cursed Chitraketu to take birth in a demon clan. Because of that curse, Chitraketu appeared as demon. But even in demon incarnation, his devotion for the Lord's feet persisted as before.

16.7 Chapter 7

This chapter contains 5 sub-sections.

16.7.1 Removal of Doubt about God’s Partiality

The king Parikshit asked, " O fortunate one, God is said to have an equal view for everybody. Why then does He favor the gods alone. Why does He kill the

demons only? Thus I have some doubts regarding God's impartiality. Kindly remove them."

Shukdev says, " Parikshit, God's sketches are so vivid that even the great sages can't comprehend them fully. Even then just by reciting these surprising sketches of God, one receives the supreme position. Accepting the virtues of this illusion, God acquires the opposing forms of killer and killed occasionally. Virtues like Satya (chastity), Rajas (royalty) and Tamas (darkness) are of nature, and not of God and hence keep rising and falling with time. When Satguna (chastity) rises, God adopts the gods and the Sages and causes a surge in their number. A rise in Rajas (royal) virtues sees a surge in demons number. While a rise in Tama (darkness) virtues leads to a surge in the population of the Yaksh and Rakshasas (ogres and other super natural beings). But God is infact impartial. Shukdev says, " O king once Devarshi Narad had related an incident to your grandfather Yudhishthir. I'm narrating it to you right now. Your doubts will be removed."

16.7.2 Dialogue of Narad – Yudhishthira (Tales of Jay-Vijay)

During the Rajsuya Yagya in Yudhishthir's court, Lord Krishna had beheaded Shishupal with His wheel. Everyone, including Yudhishthir saw Shishupal's soul annihilating in Lord Krishna. Surprised Yudhishthir had asked Narad then, " O Devarshi, isn't it surprising that Shishupal who was so jealous of Lord Krishna, got merged in Him? Such fortune is even rare for the great Yogis (ascetics). How did then this rival of God get such a supreme fortune?"

Narad said, "O king criticism, praise, serving or negligence are all confined to the body only. When the soul is identified with the body, people suffer from the impact of scolding and abusing. God has no ego like ordinary beings, because He is the supreme soul and ultimate. If He punishes someone it is for one's benefit and not for any anger or jealousy. Therefore one must concentrate his mind in God no matter what his feelings are- enmity, devotion, fear, affection.

In God's view these feelings don't make any difference." Narad said, " Yudhishthir, in my opinion it is certain that the concentration achieved through a feeling of enmity is rare to achiev otherwise, even with devotion. This is the reason why uncountable number of sinners, who had strong enmity for Lord Krishna, merged with Him. Your cousins- Shishupal and Dantavkra were fortunate. They both were the gatekeepers of the Lord. It was by curse of Brahmin, that they had to be relegated and take birth as sinful demons."

Narad said, "O king, Brahma's Manasputras (sons begotten by thoughts) Sanakadikumars were freely roaming all over the universe. Once they reached Vaikunth (the abode of Lord Vishnu). But assuming them to be ordinary boys the gatekeepers Jay-Vijay did not allow them in. Indignant by the behaviour of the Gatekeepers, Sanakadi Kumars cursed them: "Fools both of you don't deserve a presence near God. Both of you are endowed with Rajaguna and Tamoguna (royal and dark virtues), so go and take birth as the demons." When both the

gatekeepers were falling from Vaikunth, the kind Sanakadi Kumars said, " O.K. the effect of our curse shall long for your three births only, thereafter you shall return to Vaikunth again."

16.7.3 Tale of Hiranyaksh and Hiranykashipu

By the curse of Brahmins, the gatekeepers of the God, Jay-Vijay took their first birth as the demons- Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksh. Diti was their mother. Hiranyaksh had stolen the earth and hidden it in Sutala Loka, causing worries for Brahma. To remove the worries of Brahma, Lord appeared as Varahavatar (the boar incarnation) and killed Hiranyaksh. After the killing of Hiranyaksh his elder brother Hiraykashipu developed enmity with Lord Vishnu. He avowed to other demons: "I will kill that tricky Vishnu with my trident. Thus no one will be able to protect the gods. All of you go out and bring havoc on them." Then Hiranykashipu cremated his younger brother Hiranyaksh, condoled mother Aditi and wife of his younger brother and himself went away to observe penance in order to acquire strength and gallantry.

In the Valley of Mandarachal Mountain, Hiranykashipu stood on one toe only and raised his hands towards sky. He continued to stand in the same position. Ultimately fire began to emerge from his head. That fire caused burning of all the three lokas (worlds.) Panicked by the fire the gods reached to Brahma and prayed to put the fire off. Brahma at once appeared before Hiranykashipu and said, "Son Hiranykashipu, your penance is over now. Now seek a boon of your wish.'

Worshipping Brahma, Hiranykashipu said: 'May I not be killed by any living being created by you, may I be killed neither in day nor in night, neither by humans nor by animals, neither by weapons nor by arms, neither on earth nor in sky. May no one match me in war. May I be an undisputed emperor of all the living beings.' Pleased by his penance, Brahma granted Hiranykashipu that rare boon.

By the virtue of Brahma's boon, Hiranykashipu grew extremely strong. Now he had no fear of death, so his atrocities increased day by day. He defeated all the gods, human beings, demons, demigods. Everyone accepted his superiority. Now, Hiranykashipu began to reside in heaven itself. He also made an all round declaration: 'all the people who worship or even remember Vishnu, shall be put to death in my kingdom. Nobody else is God except me.' Thus all the gods and demons began to worship Hiranykashipu and presented him with gifts to please him. Gandharv, Siddhas, sages, elves etc. all began to sing in his praise.

Narad says: 'O Yudhisthir, Hiranykashipu had such a brilliance that he began to receive the offerings himself of the Yagyas performed by Brahmins. On all the seven islands and upto the heaven, it was his dominion. Now he was freely and lavishly enjoying all the luxuries. Maddened by the luxuries, he even began to violate the rulings of the scriptures. Perplexed by his harsh rule, all the gods went into the refuge of the Almighty. Through a celestial voice, God comforted

them: 'Don't be afraid O gods. I am aware of havoc caused by this demon. I will destroy him, you wait for some more time. When he will begin to torment his calm and devotee son Prahlad, I will definitely kill him.'

The demon king Hiranykashipu had four sons. Prahlad was youngest of them, Prahlad was the greatest lover and devotee of God. Hiranykashipu had declared such a pious son like Prahlad a criminal of the state. Thus he tried his best to kill Prahlad.

16.7.4 Sketch of Prahlad, The Great Devotee

Pious virtues of Prahlad: - The youngest son of the demon king Hiranykashipu, Prahlad was very virtuous. He used to serve the sages with love. He treated all the beings equally and did never differentiate them as separate from him. He had a respect for the elders. Despite having knowledge, wealth, beauty, and nobility, Prahlad didn't have any ego. He never lost patience even in most adverse conditions. He also regarded the world as false and worthless. He had no desire for anything, but had full restraint on his mind, organ, breath, and body. Despite having born in demon family, he didn't have any demonic virtues. Narad says: 'O Yudhisthir, as the virtues of the God are endless, similarly the virtues of Prahlad had no limit. But a natural and congenital love for Lord Shri Krishna was his greatest merit.

Since his childhood, Prahlad had no inclination for childish plays. Often he used to meditate silently. During his meditation, he used to become quite motionless. More than often he felt as if God himself was fondling him taking him in His lap. At times when he experienced an absence of God, Prahlad would cry loudly, and at other times he would laugh with joy seeing God before him. He also used to sing, shout and even dance whenever he felt God nearby. Occasionally, Prahlad used to mimic God, or feeling the soft touch of God, sit peacefully without movement. Such was the trance like condition of Prahlad who had a complete submersion in devotion for God.

Education of Prahlad:

Shukracharya was the teacher of the demons. Sukhracharya's two sons had been appointed to teach the boys of the royal family. Staying at a place closer to the royal palace, these two brothers taught the boys in politics, economics etc. Prahlad too was sent to them for formal education. There he used to listen to his teachers carefully and recite what he had been taught. But Prahlad did not like the education, which was based on falsehood. One day Hiranykashipu took Prahlad in his lap and asked lovingly: 'My son, tell me, what you like the most.' Prahlad said: 'Father, in my opinion, this world is nothing but full of sorrow. Hence it is just for every being that they should give up this blind-pit like world and go to the forests and take shelter in God, to be free of miseries.' Alarmed by these words, Hiranykashipu warned the teachers, the sons of Shukracharya, to look after Prahlad well, and to remove that mean thoughts of devotion from his mind. He also cautioned the teachers to guard Prahlad

against any possible approach by a god, ascetic or Brahmin.

Guruputras (the teacher of Prahlad) tried their best and trained Prahlad in policies of Sama, Dama, Dand, Bhed (conviction, temptation, fear of punishment and partiality.) Then they trained him in Arth, Dharma and Kama (economic matters, religion and carnal knowledge.) When they felt satisfied with their efforts the Guruputras brought Prahald again to his father, the demon king Miranykasipu.

Hiranykashipu kissed Prahlad's head and took him in his lap and asked, "My son Prahlad, tell me in detail what you have learned from your teacher during your stay with them." Prahlad said, "Father there are nine kinds of devotion for Lord Vishnu. If one develops these nine kinds of devotion with dedication, I understand, it would be the best education." Infuriated by these words, Hiranykashipu threw Prahlad on the floor and began to scoff at Guruputras.

16.7.5 Attempts to Kill Prahlad

Hearing his father scoffing at Guruputras, Prahlad said, "Father it was not taught to me by them, it is my natural inclination." These words further infuriated Hiranykashipu. Blinded by anger he ordered his soldiers to kill Prahlad at once. Formidable demons hit Prahlad with their arms. At that time Prahlad's conscience was focused in God. All the blows of the demons yielded no result. Thereafter, Prahlad was trampled by intoxicated elephants, bitten by poisonous snakes thrown from the high cliffs into the sea and even in fire, buried under the mountain but all in vain. None of the attempts could do any harm to the sinless Prahlad.

Now, Hirankashipu began to feel worried because of his inability. Seeing him worried the teacher assured him, "Be free of worries, O king. Keep your son tied in Varunpash (the noose of varun) until our father Shukracharya returns." Then they again took Prahlad to their hermitage to teach him Grihasthdharm (duties of a married man). One day the teachers were away for some urgent work. Prahlad called his classmates and began to preach them about Lord Vishnu.

Preaching to Demon Boys by Prahlad:

Prahlad preached, "Friends, human incarnation is a rare thing in this world. So taking shelter at the feet of God in this human incarnation is a success for life. Brothers, God is the friend, beloved and the soul of each and every being. Sensual pleasures are easily available in every incarnation, so it is useless to make physical efforts to achieve sensual pleasures. But this human body is a means to get God. So, as long as the body is sound and healthy and it has strength one must work for his benefits.

Half of the life of a man is simply wasted in sleeping. First twenty years pass in playing, Young age passes in satisfying the ego while during the twenty years of old age human body becomes crippled. So friends don't waste your life running

after the physical pleasures, luxuries, wealth and all that leads to a certain fall. One needs not work hard to please the God. He is soul of every living being. He is self-achieved. Only do good to every living being, be kind to them unconditionally.

God is pleased with these actions only. Impressed by the beautiful preaching of Prahlad about Bhagwad Dharma, the demon boys asked, "O prince, you have never been away from the hermitage. How then did you get such a knowledge at such a raw age? Prahlad told his fellow disciples that when his father was away on Mandarachal for penance, Indra had kidnapped his mother Kayadhu. He was taking her to Devloka when Devarshi Narad stopped him in the way and asked why he was taking such a helpless woman so forcibly. Indra had told then that he would destroy her foetus who was going to be a demon and thereafter would let her go.

Narad had said, "Devaraj there is a great devotee of God in this foetus, you cannot kill him. But you need not fear him." Thus convinced by Narad, Indra had released Kayadhu who then came to stay at Narad's hermitage to pass her time. In the pious company of Narad who, with a desire to benefit my mother and me, had preached us about Bhagwad dharma, and absolute knowledge (Vishuddha Gyana)." It is that knowledge which I have preached you just now. God is pleased with unconditional love only. So you too develop devotion for God."

16.8 Chapter 8

This chapter contains 5 sub-sections.

16.8.1 Description of the Manvataras

(1) **Swayambhu Manvantra-** King Parikshit said to Shukdev, "Gurudev, I just heard that tale of self-begotten Manu's lineage. Now kindly describe to me about the others Manus. Also describe the plays of God's different incarnations which occurred during different Manvantaras." Shukdev said, "Parikshit, during Tamas Manvantara, Lord Narayana was born as Hari incarnation from Harini, the wife of a sage. In that incarnation He saved an elephant from the jaws of a crocodile. During the present Kalpa (period comprising the sum of all the four Yugas), six Manvantaras have passed. I have described the first one. Now, listen to the description of the other Manvantaras."

(2) **Swarochish Manvantara-** Swarochi Manu was the son of Agni. He had sons named Dyumana, Sushena and Rochismana. During that Manvantara, Indra's post was occuppied by Rochan. Scholars of Vedas like Vrajstambh etc. were among the Saptarishi (seven great sages). Lord had taken incarnation as Vibhu, the son of a sage Vedshira and his wife Tushita. Vibhu remained a loyal celibate lifelong. Following His conduct, eighty-eight thousand more sages observed celibacy life long.

(3) **Uttam Manvantara-** Third Manu Uttam was the son of the king Priyvrata. He had sons named Pawan, Sanjay, Yagyhotra, etc. In that Manvantar,

seven sons of the sage Vashisht were Saptarishi (the seven great sages). Indra's name was Satyajit. Satya, Vedshrut and Bhadra were the main Ganas (courtiers) of the God. God had appeared in the incarnation of Satyasen, the son of Dharma and Sunrita. He was accompanied by Devganas named Satyvrata. Lord had destroyed during that period the evil Yakshas, demon and poltergeists.

(4) **Tamas Manvantara-** Tamas, the fourth Manu was the real brother of Uttam, the third Manu. He had ten sons. Trishikh was Indra then, with Satyak, Hari, Veer etc. as his main courtiers. Sage like Jyotirdham etc. were the Saptarishi. During that Manvantara Lord had saved Gajendra from the jaws of the crocodile.

(5) **Raiwat Manvantara:** Raiwas was the fifth Manu. He was also the real brother of Tamas, the third Manu. He had many sons. Vibhu was the name of Indra. Sages like Hiranyroma, Vedshira, Urdhubahm were among Saptarishi. God had appeared in the incarnation of Vaikunth the son of the sage Shubh and his wife Vikuntha. At the request of Goddess Laxmi, Lord Vaikunth created Vaikunth dham, the best among all other lokas (worlds).

(6) **Chakshush Manvantara:** Chakshush was the sixth Manu. He had sons named Puru, Purush, Sadyumn etc. Mantrradruma was Indra then, with Apya etc. as main courtiers. Sages like Havishmana and Veeraka etc. were among the Saptarishi. During that Manuantara, Lord had appeared in partial incarnation as Ajit, the son of Vanraj and his wife Sambhunti. It was he who caused the churning of the sea and made the God's drink nectar and supported Mandarachal Mountain on his back in Kachchhap (tortoise) from during the churning.

(7) **Vaivasvata Manvantara:** Shri Shukdev says, " Parikshit in the present era, the seventh Manu, Shardhdev is the son of Surya. He has ten sons- Ikshvaku, Nabhag, Drisht, Sharyati, Narishyanta, Nabhag, Disht, Karush, Prishadhra and Vasumana. Purandar is the name of Indra. He has Aditya, Vasu, Rudra, Vishvadev, Marudgana, Ashwini, Kumar and Rishi as his main courtiers. Kashyapa, Atri, Vashishtha, Vishvamitra, Gautam, Jamadagni and Bhardwaj are the Saptarishi. During this Manvantara, God has arrived in Vamana incarnation as the son of Kashyapa and his wife Aditi.

(8) **Savarni Manvantara:** Savarni, the son of Surya and Chhaya would be the eighth Manu. The king Surath, who had occurred in Swarachish Manvantara, had worshiped Goddess Bhagwadi intensely, and thus received a boon of having an unbroken empire on earth. In later course he will be the son of Surya and become the eighth Manu also. He would have sons like Nirmaka, Virajask etc. Vairochana Bali would be Indra, Amritprabha etc. as his main courtiers. Galava, Diptimana, Parashurama, Ashwatthama, Kripacharya, Rishyshring and Vyas- these great sages would be the Saptarishi during the eight Manvantara. God would take incarnation as Sarvbhaum, the sons of Devguhya and his wife Saraswati. God as Sarvbhaum would snatch the kingdom of Swarga (heaven) from Purandara Indra and give it to the king Bali.

(9) **Ninth Manvantara:** Shri Shukdev says, Varuna's son Dakshasavarni would be the ninth Manu. He would have sons like Bhutaketu, Diptketu, Dyutimana etc. God would take birth as the incarnation of Rishabh, the son of sage Ayushmana and his wife Ambudhara. A person named Adbhut would be Indra and he would have Para, Marichigarbh etc. as his main courtiers.

(10) **The Tenth Manvantara:** Upshloksa's son Brahma Savarni would be the tenth Manu. He would be very pious in nature and have sons like Bhurishen etc. Havishmana, Sukriti, Satya, Jay, Murti etc. would be Saptarishi. Shambhu would be Indra, with Suvasana, Viruddh etc. as his main courtiers. God would appear in the incarnation of Vishwasen as the son of Vishwasrij and his wife Vishuchi. He would be a friend of Indra.

(11) **The Eleventh Manvantara:** The self-restraining Dharmasavarni would be the eleventh Manu. He would have ten sons. Vaidhrita would be Indra with Vihangama, Kamagama, etc. as main courtiers. Vedic sages like Arun etc. would be the Saptarishi. God would appear as Dharmasetu, the sons of Aryak and Vaidhrita. In this incarnation he would protect Triloki (all the three worlds).

(12) **Twelveth Manvantra:** Rudrasavarni would be the twelfth Manu. He would have sons named Devavana, Updev and Devshreshth etc. Ritdhama would be Indra with Hari etc. as his main courtiers. As the son of Satyasahay and his wife Sunrita, the God would protect this Manvantara in the form of Swadham.

(13) **Thirteenth Manvantara:** Devsavarni would be the thirteenth Manvantara. He would have sons named Chitrasen, Vichitra etc. Divaspati would be Indra of the gods like Sukarm, Sutram etc. Sages like Nirmoka, Tatvadarsh etc. would be the Saptarishi. God would appear as Yogeshwar, the sons of Devhotra and his wife Brihati. He would bestow the designation of Indra to Divaspati.

(14) **Fourteenth Manvantara:** Indrasavarmi would be the fourteenth Manu. He would have sons like Uru, Gambhir Buddhi etc. Shuchi would be Indra and have Pavitra Chakshush etc. as his main courtiers. Agni, Bahu, Shuchi, Magadh etc. would be the Saptarishi. God would appear in the incarnation of Brihadbhahu as the son of Satrayana and his wife Vinata and cause the extension of Karmakand (actions)."

Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, these fourteen Manvantaras had continued in past, are continuing in the present and they would continue in the future also. It is by them, that a Kalp (a period of thousand Chaturyugas) is completed. Calculation of time is also done through these Manvantaras.

Period of a Manvantra is slightly more then seventy one Chaturyugas (all the four Yugas passing seventy-one times). A Chaturyugya (period of all the four Yugas taken together) lasts for about 3 million years, while a Kalpa lasts for about four thousand three hundred and twenty million years. This is equal to a day of Brahma. Brahma's night is Mahapralaya (the great deluge). When that night is over, Brahma again begins the work of new creation exactly as per the

previous Kalpa. Carrying out this responsibility continuously for a century, Brahma goes back to Bhagwad dham (the abode of Lord Vishnu).

His responsibilities are taken over by the next Brahma, who carries out the work of creation, by the inspiration of Lord Narayana.

16.8.2 Tale of Gajendra, the elephant and Grah, the crocodile

King Parikshit asked, "Munivar, God had salve Gajendra, in His Hari incarnation. I wish to hear this tale."

Shukdev says, " O king, in Tamas Manvantara, God had appeared as Hari and saved Gajendra from the jaws of Grah the crocodile. I am narrating the tale to you listen to it carefully. Surrounded by Kshirsagar, there was a high mountain named Trikuta. In the dense forest on the mountain there lived Gajendra along with his harem of many cows. Gajendra was the king of many big and strong elephants.

One day, Gajendra was passing his time playfully with his family in the forests. It was very hot that day. So, perplexed by the sun, Gajendra descended down the mountain with his family. At the foothills, there was a big lake with deep, cold water and many lotuses blooming in it. Gajendra entered the lake and drank water to his fill. Then he took bath and started to play in the water. His activities in the water disturbed the crocodile who lived there. With anger, the crocodile caught hold of Gajendra's leg. Startled by the sudden attack, Gajendra put all his might to get free but in vain. They only jostled against each other for long. Every moment, crocodile's strengths seemed to be gaining. At last, because of constant pulling into water, Gajendra's strength gave away. Now, he was very desperate and thought that God has sent the crocodile as a noose of Yama (death) for him. This thought horrified the elephant, so he decided to take refuge at Shri Hari.

Prayer of God by Gajendra:

Gajendra had the memory of his previous birth fresh. So concentrating his mind in the beautiful appearance of God, he began to pray, "I take refuge at God, who is the base of the entire world, who is the ultimate refuge for everyone. It is difficult to unfold the mysteries of His plays. He takes many guises. Not even the sages and the gods know His appearance and glory. May such a Lord protect me. O Lord, your powers are unending. You are gracious to those who take refuge in you. Illusioned by you, this humble creature does not recognize you. O Lord, I am in your refuge."

Shukdev says, "Parikshit, Gajendra had prayed God impartially and unspecifically so other gods did not come to save him. Being the soul of everyone, Lord Shri Hari appeared Himself and saw Gajendra in deep crisis. When Gajendra saw that Lord Shri Hari had arrived on his vehicle Garuda from the sky, he picked a lotus from the lake and raised it in his trunk and said, "O

Jagadishwar (God of all world) Narayana, here is a salutation for you." By then Lord jumped down from the Garuda and dragged both of them out of water. Then He tore the jaws of the crocodile by his wheel and saved Gajendra. All the gods, Brahma and Lord Shivaa worshiped God and showered flowers on Him.

Previous Births of Gaja & Grah:

Killed by the God, the crocodile at once acquired a divine appearance. He was a good-natured Gandharva (demigod) named Huhu, in his previous birth. By the curse of Mahatma Deval, he had to take birth in crocodile form. But now, by the grace of God he was salved and went to his heavenly abode. Gajendra too received salvation by mere touch of God. He too went to the heavenly abode of God.

In his previous birth, Gajendra was a king of Pandya dynasty. His name was Indradyumna. He was a fervent devotee of God. So he had abandoned his kingdom and taken to penance on Malay Mountain. One day he was engrossed in his worship when sage Agastya arrived there with his disciples. For not getting due welcome from the king, Agastya cursed him, "You with a dull mind, who neglect his guests will be born as an elephant." But even in elephant incarnation, and by the virtues of his devotion, Gajendra retained the memory of his previous birth. God appointed him as his courtier and departed to his divine abode riding on Garuda."

16.8.3 Churning of the Sea

King Parikshit asked, "O great sage, how did God cause churning of the sea. What was the purpose behind it? Kindly tell me?" Shukdev says, "Parikshit, in the sixth Chakshush Manvantara,the demons king Bali had defeated the gods.

Indra had also lost his glory by insulting the garland which sage Durvasa had presented to him as a God's gift. Indra had put the garland in elephant's neck and then got it crushed under its feet. But now having lost his kingdom and struck by misfortune, Indra and other gods with Brahma prayed to the Lord . Melted by their prayers, God appeared before them. All the gods laid before Him and worshiped. The omnipotent God inspired the gods to churn the sea.
Lord asked the gods to churn the sea and produce nectar. He also advised them to take the help of demons in that great task. Drinking the nectar one becomes immortal. God asked the gods to put various medicinal plants and vegetations in Kshirsagar (sea of milk) and churn it by Mandarachal Mountain moving it with the help of Vasuki the naga. God promised them of all help from His part.

Thereafter, Indra and other gods went unarmed to the demon king Bali and told him of their intention. Demons too liked the idea. With a friendly attitude then the gods and the demons together uprooted the mount Mandarachal. But they could not carry it to the sea. Lord appeared on Garuda and carried the mountain to the sea.

The gods and demons had promised Vasuki, the Naga his due share in the nectar. So Vasuki allowed them to use him as a rope, wound around Mandarachal as a means to move it. In the incarnation of Ajit, Lord told the gods to hold the head of Vasuki. But the demons suspecting some mischief said they would hold the head and asked the gods to hold the Naga from the tail for churning. Thus the gods held the tail while the demons took hold of Vasuki's head.

Thus they began the churning. But as soon as the churning began the mountain started sinking for not having a firm base. Lord then took Kachchhap (tortoise) incarnation and supported Mandarachal on His back. On the mountain also Lord appeared in Sahastrabahu form, and held it. The gods and the demons churned the sea for long but nothing emerged. So, Lord Ajit himself began to churn the sea. First of all, it was Halahal, the deadly poison to emerg. The intensity of the poison began to torment every being. To save their subjects from it, Prajapatis prayed Lord Lord Shiva. The life-giver, Lord Bholenath (an epithet of Lord Shiva) drank all the poison. By the impact of the poison, Lord Lord Shiva's throat turned blue in color. Hence Lord Shiva got the name Nilakantha.

Emergence of Gems & Nectar: After Lord Shiva drank the poison, the gods and the demons began to churn the sea again with greater enthusiasm. Now, Kamadhenu, the divine cow emerged. She was useful for Yagya etc. so the sages received it. Then a horse named Uchchaishrava, emerged and taken up by Bali the king of demons. The horse was followed by Airavat the elephant. Indra took it. The divine gem, Kaustubh Mani, emerged then. Lord Ajit took it on His chest. Then emerged the Kalpvriksha, the divine tree that reached the heavens. Then the elves emerged. They all accepted to serve Indra in Heaven.

Goddess Lakshmi emerged after the elves. All the azimuths were lighted because of her brilliance. Everyone was attracted towards her beauty, generosity, youthfulness, appearance and glory. Devaraj Indra presented a throne for her to sit. Rivers brought water for her ceremonial bath. The earth presented medicinal bath. Cows gave Panchganyas and Vasant (spring) presented many kinds of fruits and flowers. The sages welcomed Lakshmi with Rigsuktas (hymns of Rigveda). Gandharvas sang in her praise. Then taking the lotus in her hand, Lakshmi took a seat on the throne. Sea donned her with a beautiful silk saree. Varun presented a garland. Saraswati gifted her with a necklace of pearls. Brahma presented lotus while Nagas presented two earrings.

After the singing by Brahmins in her praise, Lakshmi took lotus garland in her hand and put it around Lord Vishnu's neck in a gesture of accepting Him as her husband. Jagatpita, Lord Vishnu too gave Lakshmi a supreme position in His heart. Lakshmi was followed by Varuni who was taken up by the demons.

The gods and the demons began to churn the sea again. At last lord Dhanvantari emerged with an urn of nectar. It was Dhanvantari who developed

Ayurved, the ancient Indian system of medicine. As soon as the demons saw the urn, they snatched it and ran away. A row then began among the demons over the drinking of nectar. Consoling the gods, Lord appeared among the demons in the guise of an extremely pretty woman, Mohini.

Distribution of Nectar by Lord as Mohini: The demons who were fighting over the potions of nectar forgot everything when they saw Mohini, who was actually a guise of Lord Vishnu. Lured by her prettiness the demons came to Mohini and requested her to solve the dispute for them. Illusioned by God, the demons even gave the nectar to Mohini and sat peacefully showing their confidence in her. In Mohini's guise, Lord thought that the demons were congenitally cruel and giving nectar to them would be akin to feeding sakes with milk. Their evils would increase.

So, Mohini offered the nectar to the gods only while offered wine to the demons. When the nectar was being distributed, a demon named Rahu took the guise of a god and sitting among them drank the nectar. Suurya and Chandra spotted him and revealed his identity to God, who at once beheaded him. But, by then Rahu had drunk enough nectar.

16.8.4 Conquering of Heaven by King Bali

Shukdev says, "Parikshit by the virtues of the ambrosia, the gods had become invincible. They began to take revenge and the demon king Bali met his death in the battle. When Brahma saw the imminent extermination of the demons, he sent Devarshi Narad in the battlefield to make the gods abstain from the war. The survivng demons carried the dead Bali towards Astachal. There, Shukracharya, the teacher of the demons, resurrected all the demons with his Sanjivani Vidya (knowledge that resurrects the dead). Thus obligated the demon-king Bali dedicated all his wealth to Shukracharya and began to serve him and other Brahmins of Bhirgu clan.

By the service of the Demons Brahmin of Bhrigu clan got very much pleased. King Bali had a long cherished desire of conquering the heaven. So the Brahmins organized a Vishvjit Yagya for Bali. At the completion of Yagya, first emerged a beautiful chariot, all covered with gold. Then green coloured horses, inexhaustible quiver and a divine shield emerged in sequence from the altar. Bali's grandfather Prahlad presented him a garland while Shukracharya gave a conch. Thus receiving all the weaponaries, king Bali took oath and circumambulated Brahmins. Thereafter, greeting them he boarded the chariot followed by powerful demons and their huge armies. Thus fully prepared Bali launched a massive attack on the heaven.

When Indra saw that Bali had come with full preparation and that his armies had surrounded Amaravati, he went to his teacher Brihaspati and asked about the reason for the demons' sudden uprising. Devguru said, "Indra, blessing of Bhrigu Brahmins is the main reason of the demons uprising. You can't face the demon armies yet, because Kaal himself is in their favor. So you all abandon

the heaven and hide somewhere." After the abdication of the heaven by the gods Bali captured it. Then he conquered all the three worlds. With advice of his priests, Bali organized one hundred Ashvmegh Yagyas. Thus by the grace of Shukracharya and other Brahmins of Bhrigu clan, king Bali got the domain of the heaven and began to rule it generously.

Preaching of Payovrata to Aditi by Kashyap: Shri Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, Aditi(mother of the gods) felt very sorry for the gods and capture of the heaven by the demons. When Sage Kashyap visited Aditi's hermitage, he saw his wife in desperate mood. On enquiring about the reason, Aditi said, " Lord by your grace my married life is running well. But I am sorry for the pitiable condition of my sons, the gods. Strong demons have snatched their abode. So kindly tell me the remedy." At her request Kashyap preached Aditi about a worship named "Payovrat" to seek the blessing God.

This worship, Payovrat is carried out during the waxing phase of the month Phalgun (that correspond to February-March months in Gregorian calendar) for twelve days continuously. One must drink milk only during the worship. One-day before starting the Vrat, that is on the day of Amavasya (moonless night) one must smear his body with the earth dug out by the boars and take bath in the river. Then, one must worship God with Shodushopchar (sixteen treatments) while following the rules prescribed for daily routine. He must recite Dwadashakshari Mantra (hymn containing twelve letters), perform Havan with Kheer (rice cooked in milk) and distribute Naivadya (remaining food from Havan) among the devotees. Reciting the twelve-lettered hymn, one must tell the rosary-string at least once about the wish. Thus, the same worship must be performed for twelve days continuously. If one feeds a Brahmin daily during the Vrat, he can be sure of God's grace.

Mother of the gods, Aditi performed Payovrat as per the advice of her husband Kashyap. Pleased by her Vrat, the Lord appeared before her in Chaturbhuj (four-armed) form. Mother Aditi laid flat on the ground to greet the God. She prayed, "O Lord you are the God of Yagya, and Yagya yourself. Those, who take refuge at your feet are saved when you are pleased, nothing remains ungettable." Lord said, " O mother of the gods, I know about your desire. You have worshipped me for your sons, But it is difficult yet to defeat the demons. But because of your worship, I will protect your sons by becoming your child."

Vaman incarnation of God: When the Lord arrived in Aditi's womb, Brahma prayed to Him. By Brahma's prayers, the unborn God appeared before Aditi. Shukdev says, " O Parikshit, on the twelfth day of the waxing phase of Bhadrapada month (corresponding to September) Lord tok birth in Abhijit Muhurta. Everywhere, everybody celebrated the arrival of God with joy. The gods showered flowers on Him. The God had arrived in Vaman (dwarf) form. His continence appearance caused tremendous joy for the sages. During Upnayan consecration of Lord, the ruling deity of the Gayatri mantra, Savitri (an epithet for Surya) preached Him the hymn. Guru gave him Yagyopavit, Kashyap gave

neck-kerchief, the earth gave black buck skin, Chandra gave scepter, Mother gave loin cloth, the sky gave umbrella, Brahma gave Kamandalu (coconut shell bowl) Saptrishi gave kush (sacred grass) while Goddess Saraswati presented God with a string of Rosaries. Yakshraj (king of Yakshas) Kuber gave him the alms bowl and mother Annapurnna gave him alms. Thus everyone payed due respect to God in Vaman (dwarf) incarnation who was radiating with divine glory.

Lord was intimated that the king Bali was performing many Ashvamegha Yagyas with Bhrigu Brahmans. He at once left for the Yagya site, at a place named Bhrigu Kachch on the banks of the river Narmada. As soon as Lord Vaman reached the site, all the sages, hosts and others present there became dull before the radiance of God. They felt as if Surya himself had arisen there. Everyone stood up to welcome God. Host Bali offered Him the best seat and washed His feet with affection. Then Bali requested God for his service.

Demanding three steps of Land by Vaman: King Bali requested, "O Brahmin , now tell me how I can serve you. You are the tangible representation of the penance of Brahmarishis. By your arrival, all my ancestors are salved, my clan is blessed, my Yagya has succeeded. Ask me whatever you wish. I am ready to give you your desired object."

Hearing the pious talk of the king Bali, Lord Vaman blessed him and said, "O king, no one have been impatient and frugal in your clan. Reputation of your grandfather Prahlad is still alive. You great grandfather Hiranykashipu had chased the illusionary Vishnu who had hid in your great grandfather's heart itself. When the infuriated Hiranykashipu could not find Vishnu anywhere in all the three worlds, he presumed that Vishnu had died because of his fear alone."

"O king" continued Lord Vaman, " You are excellent among the religious people. O demon king, you can fulfill any great desire. But I demand only as much land as could be covered in three steps of mine. I need nothing else." King Bali said, " O Batu, (dwarf Brahmin) you talk like aged persons but your mind is childish. I am the ruler of all the three worlds, and you are asking for three steps of land only, you can still ask for anything else. Lord Vaman replied," O king, greedy ones are not sated even if they get whole of the earth. But I don't want more than my requirement." King Bali agreed to donate Vaman the Land as per his demands and picked up the water pot to make resolution.

When Guru Shukracharya, saw that Bali had agreed to donate land, he tried to persuade him, "O Bali, this Vaman is none other than indestructible Lord Vishnu. He has taken incarnation of Vaman as a son of Aditi, Kashyap's wife, in the interest of the gods. Unknowingly you have made a promise to fulfil His desire. But He will snatch everything from you and hand it over to Indra. This illusionary Batu will measure whole of your empire in all the three worlds with his two steps, so you will not be able to keep your promise also. Hence, show your inability to make donation as per His demand, send Him back."

Measuring of Earth's heaven by Vaman: Shukdev says, "Parikshit with, politeness king Bali asserted to his teacher, " Gurudev, your words are true. But I am the grandson of great Prahlad. Now I cannot reverse my promise. No religion is greater than truth. I'm not afraid of any calamity except of deceiving a Brahmin." When, Shukracharya saw that his disciple Bali was determined to violate his dictate, he cursed, " O king, soon you will be devoid of the wealth you have been enjoying."

But despite having been cursed by his teacher, Bali stayed firm to his promise. Worshipping Vaman formally, he took some water on his palm and made the promise to donate land. As soon as Bali made the promise, Lord Vaman assumed a gigantic appearance and measured Bali's entire empire in his steps. In first He measured the whole of the earth. In the next He measured the heaven. The second step itself reached Satyaloka, where Brahma had once washed Lord's feet and kept the water, in a Kamandalu (a bowl of coconut shell) that came on earth later as the river Ganges. Now there was no room for God to put His third step. Lord ridiculed Bali for not keeping his promise fully, "Your everything is mine now, but your promise is still incomplete.

Shukdev says Lord ridiculed Bali but he remained unmoved with patience. He said: 'O Lord, I keep my promise fully, you put your third step on my head. I don't want a blemish on my reputation.' Lord said: 'I snatch all the wealth from people who are bestowed with my grace. They then become an inseparable devotee of me, free from every blemish.' Thus Lord Vishnu gave Bali the empire of Sutal Loka (hades) that was even richer than the heaven and said: 'I will protect you there from all the obstacles.' Your hundredth Ashvamudh Yagya shall be completed. In due course of time you shall be the king of the heaven.' This way, without fighting a battle, Lord took the empire of heaven from the demons and gave it to His brother Indra.

16.8.5 Tale of Matysa-Avatar

King Parikshit asked: 'O Gurudev, Lord is omnipotent. Why did He then take Matsyavatar like an ordinary being bound by karma? I want to hear the tale of God's Matsyavatar.' Shukdev said: 'O Parikshit, God is one. Still for the preservation of His devotees, He takes various incarnations. He also shows His plays by being present in all the creatures. But He remains unaffected by the merits and demerits of those living beings.'

'Parikshit, at the end of last Kalp, Brahma had fallen asleep, causing a Pralaya. All the worlds had been inundated then. When Brahma had fallen asleep, Vedas fell out from his open mouth. A demon Hayagreeev abducted the Vedas by his illusionary powers. Omnipotent God had known the action of the demon. So he had to take Matsyavatar (fish-incarnation).'

'There was a King named Satyavrat during that time. He was very generous and great devotee of God. Sustaining himself on water only, the King was observing

severe penance. The same King Satyavrat has come to be known as Shraddhdev, the son of Surya (Vaivashvat) in the present Kalp. One day, Satyavrat was taking a bath in the river, when a small fish came in his folded palms. The fish requested the King to save her. So the King put the fish in Kamandalu (coconut shell bowl). But in no time the fish grew too big to be accommodated in the Kamandalu. So the King transferred the fish into another, bigger pot, but again it grew too big to be accommodated in the pot. The sequence continued till the fish outgrew even the big lake. So the King decided to put the fish in the sea.

The fish, which was actually an incarnation of God, requested the King not to put it in a sea inhabited by fierce monsters. King Satyavrat grew suspicious. So with folded hands, the King requested the fish to appear in its real form. Instantaneously, Lord Narayana appeared and told the King: 'Exactly on the seventh day from now, Pralaya will inundate all the three lokas. But I will send a boat for you. You will board the boat and tether it to my horns with Vasuki, the Naga.' Having received the information of deluge, the King began to wait for its arrival while reflecting on God's virtues. On the seventh day, dense clouds gathered in the sky and began to rain torrentially. Soon whole of the earth was inundated. The King Satyavrat found the boat sent by Lord. Boarding the boat, Satyavrat began to pray to God. At his prayers, Lord preached him the knowledge of metaphysical. Thereafter, the God killed the demon Hayagreev and recovered the Vedas. When Brahma awoke from his sleep, Lord handed the Vedas to him.'

16.9 Chapter 9

This chapter contains 3 sub-sections.

16.9.1 Description of the Vaivasvat Manu Dynasty

King Parikshit requested Shukdev to describe about the dynasty of his contemporary Manu, Shraddhdev. Shukdev said: 'Parikshit, I describe about the dynasty of Manu in short because if I go in detail, it will not be completed in hundreds of years.' Manu Shraddhdev was the son of Surya and Sandhya. Name of Manu's wife was Shraddha. They did not have any child initially, so they organised a Putrayeshti Yagya under the auspices of their family teacher Vashishth. But right amidst the proceedings, the queen Shraddha prayed the Brahmins to bless her for a female child. The Brahmins made offerings as per her wish. Consequently a girl, instead of a boy, was born to them. She was named Ila. But the King requested Vashishth to transform her into a boy. Vashishth did the same, and the boy thus obtained was named as Sudyumn.

TALE OF SUDYUMN :- One day Sudyumn had gone on a hunting excursion. Riding the horse with his ministers, Sudyumn reached a forest at the foothills of Meru Mountain. The forest was the nuptial abode of Lord Shiva and Mata Parvati. As soon as Sudyumn and his companions entered the forests, they all, even horses, got converted into females. Relating its reason Sukhdev said: 'Once, Mata Parvati was sitting naked in the lap of Lord Shiva when suddenly

some great sages arrived there to have a sight of Lord. Mata Parvati sank with shyness and ran to don some cloth. When the sages saw that Gauri-Lord Shiva were enjoying intimacy, they moved at once to the hermitage of Nar-Narayana. Right at that moment, in order to please Mata Parvati, Lord Shiv said: 'Except me, any man who enters here, shall become a women.' It was because of these words of Lord Lord Shiva, that Sudyumn and his companions were transformed into females. While Sudyumn was roaming as woman, Budh, the son of Chandra, fell in love with her and they agreed to get married. From their marriage, a son, Pururawa was born, who founded the town named Pratishthanpur.

Sudyumn, in female form, prayed Lord Shiva to free him from woman incarnation. Lord Shiva blessed Sudyumn that he would be a man for a month and a woman for another. Thus this cycle would continue life long. Thereafter Sudyumn returned to the kingdom and began to rule it religiously. He got three sons in due course- Utkal, Gaya and Vimal. In the twilight of his life, Sudyumn gave his kingdom to Pururava and he took exile.

TALE OF PARISHADHRU :- After the exile of Sudyumn, Manu took to penance with a desire to have son. Pleased by his penance Shri Hari blessed him to have ten sons. Parishadhru was the eldest of them. He was appointed in the service of the cows. One night in darkness, a tiger broke into the cowshed causing a panic among the cows. Hearing the panicky noise of the cows, Prishadhru ran to the cowshed. There he saw that the tiger had caught a cow, and she was bellowing in pain and fear. Prishadhru at once ran to help and with a powerful blow of the sword he beheaded the tiger. It was pitch dark in the cattleshed, so Prishadhru could not see whom he had killed. In the morning he realized that he had killed the cow and not the tiger. He felt extremely sorry. Their family teacher cursed him to lead a life of a shudra. Prishadhru, thereafter passed his life as a celibate and mingled with the supreme Soul at last.

TALE OF SHARYATI :- Sharyati was the second son of Vaivasvat Manu. He was a great scholar of Vedas. He had an extremely beautiful daughter named Sukanya. One day, king Sharyati was in the forests with his family. Thus roaming, they reached the hermitage of the sage Chyavan. Chyavan was immersed in deep meditation. His whole body was covered with termite's nests; only eyes were shining like fireflies. Out of curiosity, the princess Sukanya pricked those shining eyes of the sage with thorns. All the king's army fell in crises by this incidence. When the king learned about the princess' crime, he begged pardon of the sage Chyavan and gave the princess in his service and himself returned to his palace.

In the forest Sukanya served Chyavan with dedication. Chyavan received youth and vigor by the grace of Ashwini Kumar. Pleased by Shukanya's dedication, sage Chyavan provided her with all queenly luxuries. After many days, king Sharyati again visited the forests. There he saw Sukanya talking to a beautiful young prince. At first Sharyati scolded at Sukanya for violating the norms of a

chast woman. But Sukanya told him about the transformation of the sage Chyavan by the grace of Ashwini Kumar. Learning the reality the king felt overjoyed to see his son-in-law Chyavan in youthful state.

TALE OF AMBRISH :- Shukdev says, " Parikshit, Sharyati was the king Nabhag. His son was Naabhaag. He was a great devotee of his parents. As a result of his service for his parents, Naabhaag was very much comfortable. He had a son Ambarish who was a great devotee of Vishnu. Even the great wealth on earth had no value for Ambarish.The king Ambarish served the God with his own hands and remained immersed in His love. Once, Ambarish followed Nirjala Ekadashi Vrat (waterless fast observed on the eleventh day of each phase of lunar month) for a year. During one such fast, on the twelfth day, king Ambarish was about to break his fast, when sage Durvasa arrived there along with his ten thousands disciples. Welcoming him, the king requested Durvasa to accept food. But the sage turned down the request saying that it was prayer time for him, so he would first go to take bath, then worship and take alms (food) ultimately. But the sage Durvasa did not return for long. Thus by the dictate of Brahmins, king Ambarish broke his fast with basil leaves and water.

Just then sage Durvasa returned and saw Ambarish breaking his fast. So taking it as an insult, the infuriated Durvasa invoked Kritya in order to kill the king. King Ambarish stood unmoved, and begged pardon with folded hands. Lord Narayana saw His devotee in trouble and inspired His Sudarshan Chakra (wheel) to save the king.

Sudarshan Chakra first incinerated Kritya, then aimed at sage Durvasa. When Durvasa saw Sudarshan aimed at him, he ran for his life. First he reached Brahma. But Brahma told him that he was not able to protect the person who had done harm to a devotee of God. Then Durvasa reached to Rudra. Lord Shiva also said, " Durvasa, by the wish of Lord, Rudras are engaged in the service of the universe. This Chakra is unstoppable by me. So you go to His refuge, only He can save you."

From Lord Shiva's abode Durvasa reached Vaikunthdham, the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu. He was feeling intense heat of the wheel. So, shivering with fear, he felt at the Lord's feet and said, "O endless, you are the only venerable of all the saints. O Lord, I have committed a great crime against your devotee. O Lord please save me". Seeing sage Durvasa in his refuge, Lord Vishnu said, " Durvasa. I am bound to my devotee. I am not independent. As the devotees abdicate their everything to receive me. Similarly I am also devoted to my devotee. So I too can't protect you. Go to the person who you wanted to hurt, and pray him. Only he can save you from the Chakra.

Thus, by the dictate of God, aggrieved Durvasa returned to the king Ambarish and fell at his feet. Ashamed of the sage act, king Ambarish prayed God, "O Lord if I had done any pious deed, may it be enough to calm you and may the heat that torments this Brahmarishi quenched." Thus by the prayers of king

Ambarish, Sudarshan was quietened and returned to its position on Lords finger and sage Durvasa recovered from his sufferings. He blessed the king and left.

16.9.2 Description of Ikshvaku Dynasty

Shukdev says, " Once Shraddhdev Manu sneezed violently. From his nostrils, a son was born. He was named Ikshvaku. Ikshvaku had one hundred sons. Vikukshi, Nimi and Dandak were the eldest three of them.

Vikukshi :- Once, Ikshvaku sent his eldest son Vikukshi to collect tubers for the offerings to be made to their ancestors. Vikukshi collected sacred Shash tubers. But, he himself was feeling tired and hungry, so he ate one of them. He gave the remaining tubers to his father. King Ikshvaku gave those tubers to Guru Vashishth for offering to the ancestors. Vashishth informed the king that the tubers were defiled and not fit for offerings. Thus told by Vashishth, Ikshvaku learned the deed of his son and expelled him out of his kingdom in anger. Vikukshi passed his life in exile and returned home only after the death of his father. He became famous as Shashad.

Puranjay :- Puranjay was the son of Vikukshi. He is also famous as 'Indravah' and 'Kakutsth.' A fierce battle had taken place between the gods and the demons.In the battle, the gods had sought the help from Puranjay. But Puranjay stipulated that he would fight only when Indra agreed to become his vehicle. From God's inspiration, Indra took the guise of a big and heavy ox and bore Puranjay on his back. When Puranjay rode on the ox and trained his divine bow and arrows, all the gods prayed to him. Since, Puranjay had taken seat near ox's hump, he came to be known as Kakutsth. Puranjay fought a fierce battle with the demons. Thus in no time Puranjay defeated the demons and captured their towns, wealth, luxuries and every other thing and gave them to Indra. Since, Indra had acted as his vehicle, hence Puranjay is also known as Indravah.

Yuvnashva :- In the lineage of Puranjay, had occurred a king named Yuvnashva. He had no son, so in desperation he gave up his kingdom and, accompanied by his queens, came to stay in the forest. There he organized a grand Yagya, Indrayag with a desire of a son and in the auspices of the great sages. The Yagya lasted day and night. But during the Yagya, Yuvnashva felt extremely thirsty and without giving a thought he drank some of the water from urn that had been sanctified with mantras. Since, the water was meant to produce a child, Yuvnashva begot a child with auspicious signs. Immediately after birth the child began to cry for milk. So to quiten him Indra put his index finger in the child's mouth. Since then, the child got the name Mandhata. Mandhata became a great emperor. He was also known as Trasdasyu because big robbers like Ravan had an inherent fear of him. Mandhata had deep self-learnings, still he organized many grand Yagyas. Mandhata had three sons- Purykuts, Ambarish (second) and Muchkund. He had fifty daughters also. All of them were married to the sage Saurabhi.

Trishanku :- In this lineage of Mandhata there occurred a king named Satyvrat.

He was renamed as Trishanku. Though by the curse of his father and the teacher, he had become a Chandal (an untouchable person) yet by the power of his penance, sage Vishvmitra helped him reach heaven with the body. But the jealous gods pushed down poor Satyvrat from the heaven. He was falling headlong while Maharishi Vishumitra supported and fixed him in mid sky, hence he got the name Trishanku.

Harishchandra :- He was the son of Trishanku. For him, two great sages Vishvmitra and Vashishth had cursed each other and acquired bird forms and kept on fighting for many years. Harishchandra had no son. With a desire to have a son, Harishchandra worshiped Varundev. By the grace of Varun, he got a son named Rohit. Caught in the love for his son, Harishchandra forgot to organize Yagya to pay his thanks to Varun. Rohit too had fled to the forest to save his life when he learned that his father wished to sacrifice him. He stayed there for long. Back there in the kingdom Harishchandra acquired a deadly disease of Dropsy as a result of Varuna's anger. Having learnt about his father's illness, Rohit tried five times to return to the kingdom, but every time Indra forebode him. Thus he stayed in the forest for six years. But in the seventh year he bought the middle son of Ajigart and took him to the kingdom to be used as a votive animal. There he handed the boy over to his father. Thereafter, king Harishchandra organized a grand Yagya and pleased Varun. Pleased by their unshakable faith in truthfulness sage Vishvamitra blessed Harishchandra and his wife and preached them about metaphysical knowledge.

SAGAR :- In the lineage of Rohit later on, had occurred a King Bahuk. Unfortunately, he met an untimely death. One of his widowed wife got ready to be immolated with her husband's pyre. She was pregnant then, so the sage Aurv prevented her from getting Sati. When her fellow queens learnt about her pregnancy, they fed her with poisoned food. But the poison proved ineffective on the unborn baby. The baby was born in due course with poison, so he came to be known as Sagar. Sagar had a great reputation as the King. He had sixty thousand sons. He had also resolved to organize one hundred Ashvmamegh Yagyas. His ninety-nine Yagyas completed without hassles, but during the hundredth Yagya, Indra stole the horse and tethered it in the hermitage of the sage Kapil. Sagar's sixty thousand sons set out in search of the horse, but could not find it anywhere on earth.

At last, they reached the hermitage of the sage Kapil. Before that, with their enormous power, they had dug out huge pits, which filled with water and formed the sea. The sea derived its Hindi Synonym Saagar from Sagar. When those sixty thousand princes saw that the Yagya horse was Tethered in Kapil's hermitage, they began to abuse the sage. Disturbed by the noise, the sage Kapil opened his eyes, and instantaneously all the sixty thousand princes got incinerated. It was Anshumana, the grandson of Sagar, who pacified sage Kapil with his politeness and brought back the horse. He also discovered the ashes of his ancestors. Sage Kapil told Anshumana that the salvation of his ancestors would be possible only if touched by Gangaji, (the sacred Ganges). Since then,

all the kings in Sagar's lineage observed severe penance to bring the Ganges on earth for the salvation of their ancestors.

Bhagirath :- First of all, king Anshumana observed hard penance. But even after many years of penance he could not succeed in his efforts. His son Dileep also observed sever penance, but his efforts too, could not succeed. Bhagirath was the son of Dileep. After Dileep, Bhagirath started severe penance. After many years of penance, Bhagirath succeeded in pleasing the Ganges. She appeared before him and asked him to seek a boon. Bhagiratha requested the Ganges to arrive on earth. The Ganges accepted his wish, but put a question as to who would support her when she fell on earth from the heaven. Bhagiratha then began his penance again to please Lord Shiva so that He could support the Ganges on earth. Lord Shiva accepted Bhagirath's prays and supported the Ganges on his head. Thereafter He moved on the path shown by Bhagirath with sacred Ganges following. Thus, the sacred Ganges reached at the place where ashes of Bhagirath's ancestors were lying. The holy waters of the Ganges washed the ashes to the confluence at Ganga Sagar. By the mere touch of Ganges' holy water, Bhagirath ancestors received salvation.

After Bhagirath many great kings like Michsah, Khatvang, Dhirghbahu, Raghu etc. occurred in the Ikshvaku dynasty. Raghu's son was Aja and his son was Dashrath. It was in the home of King Dashrath, and by the prayer of the gods, that Lord Shri Hari took birth as four sons of Dashrath.

Description of Lord Rama's Plays :- Shukdev says, " Parikshit, to keep the words of his father, Lord Rama abdicated the entire kingdom and took exile in the forest. Staying in the forest Lord Rama protected many sages, and helped them complete their religious rituals successfully. He slayed many formidable demons there. But, for cutting the nose and ears of Shupanakha, the sister of demon king Ravan, He had to bear the separation of his wife sita.

Rama had won Sita as his wife in a swayamvar in Janakpur. In his teenage, sage Vishmatria had taken Rama and Laxmana with him to his hermitage to guard his religious proceedings against the demons. Rama and Laxmana had killed many demons then. It was during this period that the swayamvar was organized in Janakpur. Lakshmi, the better half of Lord Vishnu, had herself appeared as Sita in Janakpur. Sage Vishvamitra himself taken Rama and Laxmana to the swayamvar. Many more brave and strong kings and princes had gathered there. But no one could train the Bow of Lord Shiva as per the condition of the swyamvar. It was only Rama, who not only lifted the bow but trained it also. In the process of training, the bow broke with a loud noise. Thus Lord Rama won Sita as His wife.

But during the exile the demon king Ravan deceitfully abducted Sita to avenge the insult of his sister Shurpanakha. Thereafter, the circumstances favored Lord Rama and He soon found out the whereabouts of Sita. With a huge army of monkeys and bears, Lord Rama reached the seashore there He prayed to the

sea to make way for Him. But the sea did not pay heed to his prayers, so angrily He got ready to evaporate the sea. Thus frightened, the sea revealed to Him the way to make a bridge over it. Lord Rama then built a bridge over the sea and landed in Lanka. A fierce battle followed in which Lord Rama and Laxman together slayed the demon king Ravan, his brother Kumbhkarn and Megnaad, the son of Ravan.

Thus, they got Sita free from Ravan's captivity. Crowning Vibhishan, the brother of Ravan as the King of Lanka, they returned to Ayodha on Pushpak Vimana. Brahmrishis crowned Rama as the king of Ayodhya. All the three worlds became happier, healthier and wealthier. Bharat, Lakshmana, Shatrughn and Hanumanji stayed forever in the service of Lord Rama always following the moral dictates and put an example for the world of high morals. As a king, Lord Rama also organized Ashvmegh Yagya.

16.9.3 Chandra Dynasty

Shukdev says, "Parikshit, now I narrate about Chandra dynasty. Many great and pious kings like Pururava had occurred in this dynasty. Chandrama was the son of Atri, the son of Brahma. Budh was the son of Chandrama while Pururava was the son of Budh. Ila was the mother of Pururava. He was very virtuous. Attracted by his virtues, elf Urvashi had approached Pururava with a sensual desire. Pururava welcomed Urvashi, and together they begot six sons- Ayu, Shrutayu, Satyayu, Ray, Vijay and Jay.

Gaadhi :- In the lineage of Vijay the son of Pururava, there had occurred a king Gaadhi. Gaadhi had a daughter Satyvati. Satyvati was married to the sage Richik. Richik and Satyvati begot Jamadagni who married Renuka, the daughter of sage Renu. Jamadagni and Renuka begot Parashuram. In the same lineage, later on, occurred great kings like Rantidev, Shibi, Yadu, Kuru, Puru, Dushyant and Bharat. In this lineage of Kuru, king Shantanu had married Ganga, who gave birth to Bheeshma. Satyavati, the daughter of Nishad was the second wife of Shantanu. She begot Chitrangad and Vichitravirya. Chitrangad had died in an encounter with a demigod of his own name, while Vichitravirya was married to Ambika and Ambalika the princesses of Kashi. But, having too much caenal indulgence with his wives, Vichitravirya soon developed tuberculosis and died without producing a child.

Since, Bheeshma had vowed to abide by celibacy till death, so Vyasji was summoned to produce children from Ambika and Ambalika. From Vyasji the two queens and a maid gave birth to Dhritrashtra, Pandu and Vidur respectively. Dhritrashtra had one hundred sons. The Kuaravas, while Pandu's wife Kunti begot Karan, Ydhishthir, Bheem and Arjun. Pandu's second wife Madri begot Nakul and Sahdev. Arjun had married Subhadra, the sister of Lord Krishna also. Subhadra had begot Abhimanyu who was married to Uttra, the daughter of Viratraja, and you were born to Uttara, O Parikshit.

In Yaduvansh, lineage of Yadu a king Shursen had occurred. He had a son

Vasudev. Vasudev had eight wives. Devaki was the prominent among them. Nine children were born to them. Kansa, the brother of Devki, killed six of them. Seventh was Balrama, eighth Krishna, and at ninth place was her daughter Subhadra.

Shukdev says, "O Parikshit, Lord Himself had appeared as the son of Vasudev and Devaki. Whenever the religion and religious virtues fall in the world and sins rises, the omnipotent, Lord Shri Hari takes incarnation to destroy the evils, and protect the pious ones and establish the religion again.

When the evil demons took the guise of the kings and began to route the earth, Lord Vishnu then took the incarnation as Lord Krishna. Along with Him, Sheshnaga, His bed, also took incarnation as Balarama, in Yadu Vansh. Together they presented such divine plays that even the gods could not guess them.

At the same time, to benefit the devotees, who would be born in Kaliyuga, Lord Krishna expounded His pious life into uncountable incidents. Merely by reciting and hearing the tales of Lord's life, all the sorrows, melancholis and ignorance of the devotees are removed. Through the battle of Mahabharata between Kauravas and Pandavas, Lord Krishna relieved the earth of most of her burdens. He Himself slayed many demons, while got many slain by Balarana. Ultimately, preaching Uddhav about metaphysical knowledge, Lord Krishna departed to His divine abode.

16.10 Chapter 10

This chapter is very large - containing 85 sub-sections.

Hearing the tales of Royal dynasties from Shukdev, king Parikshit requested "Guruvar, you have just narrated the suprising tale of Suryvansh and Chandravansh (dynasties). Now I wish to hear the tales of Lord Krishna's life in detail. It was because of God's grace that my ancestors could successfully win the Mahabharata. I to had experienced Lords grace while I was an unborne child and Ashvathama had triggered Brahmastra to destroy me. It was the Lord himself who saved me from the heat of Brahmastra with his wheel. O sage, therefore, kindly narrate the tale of Krishna's life who is the soul of every living being. I do not feel thirsty or hungry while hearing the pious tale of God's life from you."

Pleased by the pure devotion of Parikshit for God, Shukdev Says, "When the atrocities of evil demons increased on earth beyond a certain limit, the perplexed earth reached to Brahma in the guise of a cow, and vented her sorrows. Brahma took her and Lord Shiva to Lord Vishnu and prayed Him through Purushsukta. Lord heard their prayers and said, "I know about the sufferings of poor earth. Very soon, I'll take incarnation in Yaduvansh to elevate her burden. All the gods, should take birth in Yadukul to assist me during my human incarnation. And to serve my beloved Radha, all the elves should appear

as the womenfolk of Yudu community."

Brahma dictated the gods and said that even Yog Maya (personification of illusions) of Lord Vishnu would take a partial incarnation to assist the Lord in His plays. Thus consoling the earth Brahma returned to his abode.

16.10.1 Marriage of Vasudeva and Devaki

Shursen's son Vasudev was married to Devaki, the daughter of Devak. After the marriage ceremony, Ugrasen's son and Devki's cousin Kansa was driving the chariot of newly wedded couple. On the way a celestial voice proclaimed " O Fool Kansa, the eighth son of your beloved sister, whose chariot you are driving so affectionately, shall be the cause of your death.." Hearing the voice Kansa drew out his sword to kill Devaki. But Vasudev prayed to him politely, "Prince Kansa, you are the descendent of Bhoj dynasty, you are a brave man. It does not fit you bravery that you are yourself ready to kill your sister. She is a woman and has just got married. She has not done any harm to you, she deserves pity. If you fear her children, I promise that I will give all her children to you." Thus assured by truth abiding Vasudev's words, Kansa dropped the idea of killing Devaki.

As per his promise, Vasudev gave his first newborn child to Kansa. Pleased by Vasudev's abidance to truth, Kansa said, "You eighth son will be my enemy, so I will kill only your eighth son. Take the child back." At the same time, singing in Lord's praise, Devarishi Narad appeared there and said, "O Kansa in view of rising atrocities of demons, Lord Narayana himself will take birth in Yaduvansh. Besides Him, all the cowboys and all others who belonged to Yadav clan are none other than the gods in Human guise. The gods are making massive preparations to exterminate evil kings and as a lotus has only eight petals and no one can mark out its eighth petal, similarly, Devaki will have eight children and no one would be able to find out who is the eighth." Saying this, Devarishi Narad disappeared,

Kansa got firm belief that all the Yaduvanshis were gods and that Lord Vishnu Himself would take birth as Vasudev and Devaki's son to kill him. He, therefore, put Vasudev and Devaki in the prison. Since then Kansa killed the children one by one soon after their birth,

Shesh Narayana Himself appeared as the seventh son. While he was still unborn, Lord Vishnu through His Yogmaya (personified illusion), transfered the embryo in Rohini's womb. Lord dictated Yogamaa that she herself should take birth from Yashoda, the wife of Nand, in Gokul. He also blessed her that in future, people would worship her as Durga, Chandika, Bhadrakali, Narayani, Vaishnavi etc. When the seventh fetus was transferred, Kansa got worried how was it destroyed. His fears and melancholy increased since then. A fear gripped him that his death was very near now.

16.10.2 Arrival of God in Unborn Baby

Kans had known that during the battle between the gods and demons he was the demon Kalnemi, and he was killed by Lord Vishnu. So fearing Lord Vishnu rallying with Yaduvanshis, Kansa cultivated high degree of hostility towards them. He captured even his father Ugrasen and put him in the prison. Now the reign of the kingdom was entirely in his hands. Kansa was himself very strong and also had the assistance of his father-in-law, Jarasandh. Formidable demon like Pralamb, Baka, Chanur, Trinavart, Aghasur, Mushtik, Arisht, Dvivid, Pootana, Kashi and Dhenuk were his courtiers. As a result of Kansa atrocities en mass exodus of Yaduvanshis from Mathura followed. These Yaduvanshis left Mathura and settled in regions like Kuru, Panchal etc. Still some of them accepted to serve Kansa, but only superficially.

When all pervasive Lord saw that Yaduvanshis were being tortured without reason, He transferred his glory in Vasudev. Through Vasudev, Devaki received that brilliant part of the lord. On the other hand, Kansa also came to know about Devaki's eighth issue. Since, then his hostility surged unprecidently and he began to wait for the birth of Devaki's eight son very anxiously. All it means to say that Kansa mind reflected on God every moment day in and day out.

16.10.3 Birth of Lord Krshna

The long awaited day also arrived at last. It was the eighth day in the waning (darker) phase of the lunar month of Bhadrapada (corresponding to August/September). Rohini, the brightest star was rising while dense clouds had gathered in the sky.

Before actual arrival, Lord manifested Himself before Vasudev and Devaki. They felt as if a full moon had risen in the east. Vasudev saw that an extraordinarily marvellous baby boy was standing before them. His eyes were as soft as lotus; He had four arms and held a conch, mace, wheel and lotus. He bore Kaustubh Mani in the neck and wore yellow clothes. Valuable ornaments adorned all parts of his body. Thus, seeing God himself arrived as his son, Vasudev was overwhelmed. Devaki too was overjoyed but feared Kansa first. Then she joyfully prayed to God. God said then, "During Swayambhu Manvantar, both of you had worshipped me with a desire of son. Vasudev was a Prajapati Sutapa while you were his wife Prishni. You had worshipped me with pure hearts. Pleased by your penance I had asked you to seek a boon, so you had sought a son like me in virtues. I had arrived then as your son Prishnigarbh. In the next birth you were Kashyap and Aditi and I was Upendra. Now, in the third birth also. I have arrived as your son."

Saying this, the Lord transformed Himself into an ordinary baby. From the inspiration of God, Vasudev wished to move the baby out of the prison. Instantaneously, all the locks of the jail opened automatically and the guards

fell asleep. Carrying the baby in a winnower, Vasudev set out for Gokul across the river Yamuna.

It was raining heavily, so Sheshnaga followed them shading the baby with his hoods. Vasudev entered the river Yamuna. Yamuna too felt overjoyed that her most beloved lord has come to her. Hence, she began to rise in order to touch His feet. Dangling his feet behind Vasudev, God let Yamuna touch them. Touching the feet, the swelling river receded at once and gave Vasudev a safe passage. Crossing the river, Vasudev reached Gokul. There, he entered the home of Nand and kept the baby beside Yashoda and took her new born baby girl and brought her to the prison. As soon as Vasudev kept the baby girl in Devaki's lap, the gates locked up again and the guards awakened.

The baby who was actually Yogmaya (personification of illusion) began to cry. The guards at once ran to inform Kansa about the birth. Kansa came running and snatched the baby from Devaki and proceeded to throw her on the stone. But before he could throw her, the baby escaped from his hands and assumed Ashtbhuji (eight-armed) Durga appearance in the sky and reprimanded him: "O fool, why are you trying to kill me, when you can't even harm me, the one who will kill you, has already appearred. Now stop killing the innocent children." Kansa stood stunned by the talks and appearance of the goddess. Goddess Bhagwadi disappeared and became omnipresent. She is now venerable with different names in different locations.

After the disappearance of Goddess (Yogmaya) Kansa felt remorse. He at once fell at the feet of his sister Devaki and brother-in-law Vasudev and began to beg their pardon. Thereafter, Kansa released both of them. In the morning, Kansa held a discussion with his ministers. The ministers, who were formidable demons themselves, assured Kans that they would kill all the babies born within ten days and destroy the Brahmins, cows, gods, ascetics and all those who could pose potential danger to him.

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, the demons were Rajoguni (having royal virtues) and Tamoguni (Virtues of darkness) and hence were unable to differentiate good from evils. Their extermination was imminent. That was why they cultivated hostility towards saints and saintly people. O King, those, who disregard saintly people, loose their life, wealth, reputation, religion and everything.

16.10.4 Festivities in Gokul for Lord’s Birth

Devaki's seventh baby was transferred before birth into the womb of Rohini. The baby was born as Baldevji. At his birth, Brahmins blessed Nand. But laughingly Nand said: "O holy Brahmins, this baby is not mine. It is born to my friend's wife." Brahmins said then: "Okay Baba, we will return only when your wife bears a child. The Brahmins thereafter organised grand worships. By their blessings Yashoda conceived.

It was Wednesday, the eighth day in the darker phase of the lunar month Bhadrapada (August/September), when Yashoda said to her sister-in-law Sunanda: "Sister, kindly wake me up, when the baby takes birth," Sunanda laughed at that. It was in fact the influence of Yogmaya. When Yogmaya took birth, all the people around her were fast asleep and continued to sleep until Vasudev came there and replaced the baby girl with baby boy. Soon after Vasudev left, Yashoda awakened from slumber and saw an extremely beautiful baby boy beside her. Nand was meditating then in the cowshed. He was informed at once. His heart too filled with supernatural joy. He took his bath, and droned new clothes. Then he summoned the Brahmins and got necessary rituals performed. Served the gods and his ancestors and donated cows, clothes, ornaments and cereals to the Brahmins.

As Nand was the chief of Vraj region, so all the people decided to celebrate baby's birth. All the houses, streets and lanes were cleaned and sprinkled with scented waters. All the gateways were embellished with flags, pylons and festoons. All the villagers began to gather in and around Nand's home. Ladiesfolk also felt overjoyed by the news of the birth of Yashoda's son. Even the cows, oxen and calves also were adorned beautifully. Brahma, Narad, Sanakadi etc. were all having the sight of lord from heaven. Even Lakshmi appeared in Gokul, illuminating all the azimuths. Gopis (ladiesfolk) decorated their palms with henna, anointed themselves with ubatan (a paste composed of gram floor and many herbs, supposed to enhance beauty) and took bath. Then they adorned themselves from tip to toes and set out for Nand's homes with various gifts. At Nand's home they sprinkled the baby with water containing turmeric and oil and sang auspicious songs loudly.

Thus, when lord appeared in Braj, grand celebration was organised in His welcome, auspicious music was played. The menfolk celebrated the joy spraying one another with milk, curd, butter etc. Nand presented the people generously with clothes, ornaments and cows. Prisoners, ascetics and beggars were given alms. At the request of Nand, Rohini herself welcomed the womenfolk. Since the arrival of lord, prosperity too came to stay in Vraj.

16.10.5 Salvation of Pootana

Shukdev says: 'Parikshit, after many days, entrusting other Gopals with the onus of guarding Gokul, Nand went to Mathura to pay annual taxes in Kansa's court. Vasudev too learned about his arrival and went to see him. Nand felt overjoyed to see Vasudev and embraced him affectionately. Vasudev asked Nand: "Your age is declining now. It is very fortunate now that you have also got a son. My Son Balarama and wife Rohini are staying with you. He would be regarding you as his parents." Nand said: The evil Kansa killed many of your children. He did not even spare your daughter, No doubt, happiness and sorrow are bound to ones fate."

Vasudev said: "Brother, now your duties here are over. You should not stay here for long, because I fear some disturbances in Gokul in your absence. Hearing this, Nand at once set out for Gokul. In the way, he reflected over the words of Vasudev and prayed God: "May God, everything thing be well in Gokul. There in Gokul however a curious incidence took place. After his discussion with evil ministers,

Kansa had sent a cruel ogress Pootana to kill all the newly born babies in his kingdom. In the guise of an extremely pretty woman, Pootana entered Gokul. She hypnotized the menfolk with her sweet smile and flirting glances. She searched new-born babies here and there and entered Nand's home eventually. Baby Lord Krishna was sleeping in the cradle. He had known about her arrival; but posed as if He were asleep. Pootana is a form of non-knowledge with an alluring outward appearance. Lord Krishna was only six days old then.

Pootana's breasts were filled with poison. Such as someone lifts a sleeping snake mistaking it for a rope. Similarly Pootana lifted the baby who proved her death. Pootana took the baby to secluded place and began to breast feed him. Lord prayed to Lord Shiva who came to stay in His throat and drank all the poison from the milk. Thereafter the Lord began to suck Pootana's life. Perplexed Pootana began to cry loudly and writhe nervously. As her death approached she regained her real, ogress appearance. All the men and women were frightened when they saw the huge, formidable body of Pootana. But when they saw Krishna playing nearby, their fear gone and with joy they lifted the baby and soothed him.

Meanwhile, Nand and his fellow Gopas too arrived from Mathura. Pootana's body testified the truth of Vasudev's words. Gopas cut Pootana's body into many pieces and burnt them outside Gokul. When her body was burning, a sweet smell of Agar (a kind of scented wood used in incense making) spread all around. Because Lord himself had fed on her milk, So all her sins were destroyed. Lord regarded her as his mother and hence salved her.

16.10.6 Killing of Shakat

When lord Krishna was twenty-seven days old, a festival was organised in Gokul. Mata Yashoda bathed the baby while the Brahmins recited hymns. Yashoda saw that baby was feeling sleepy, so putting him in a cradle, she left it under a cart. The cart was loaded with pitchers of milk, curd and butter. After sometime, lord Krishna awoke and began to cry for a feed. But amidst festivities, Yashoda could not hear his cries.

Meanwhile a demon Shakatasur rode the cart wishing to press the cart and thereby kill the Lord. But before he could act, the Lord touched the cart with His feet and lo and behold! The cart turned over and all the utensils kept on it came crashing down. Even the demon was crushed to death under the cart. Other boys, who were playing nearby, informed the Gopis (ladiesfolk) that the little Kanhaiya had turned over the loaded cart, but they did not believe the kids.

Yashoda ran in horror and lifted the baby in her lap. The Brahmins recited pacifying hymns then. Thereafter the baby was bathed again with sanctified water. A feast of Brahmins followed then. Ultimately they were seen off with many gifts.

16.10.7 Salvation of Trinavart

Once Mata Yashoda was playing with the baby lord in her home. All of a sudden she felt as if the baby was getting disproportionately heavy. Soon, she felt herself unable to bear the child anymore. So she left the child on the ground and began to pray Purushottama Lord Rama. Soon afterwards she forgot about the event, but all was not over yet. Trinavart, a demon minister of Kansa, had arrived in Gokul as a fierce cyclone. He covered entire Gokul with dust and blinded the people temporarily. For a moment people could not see anything and during that moment Trinavart blew the baby in air with him. When the dust settled, Yashoda did not find the baby Krishna where she had left him. She felt extremely sorry and fell on ground in depression. Other womenfolk also gathered round her. They too began to cry not seeing baby Krishna there.

In the form of cyclone, the demon Trinavart had blown baby Krishna with him; but he too could not bear his heavy burden. So he began to lose his velocity. Lord Krishna caught him by neck. The demon died in a few moments and his dead body fell in Vraj. And Yashoda got a new lease of life when she saw baby Krishna safe and sound. Nand and other Gopas too were overjoyed.

16.10.8 Naming of Lord Krshna

Once, the supreme ascetic Gargacharya arrived in Gokul. He was the ancestral teacher of Yaduvanshis. Nand joyfully welcomed and treated the hermit. Then he requested him to carry out the ritual of naming and suggest suitable named for both of his sons. Acharya Garg said, "O Nand, everyone knows that I am the ancestral teacher of the Yadavs. If I carry out the naming ritual for these boys, people will understand that they are Devaki's sons." So Nand requested Gargacharya to name his sons secretly. Gargacharya accepted his request and carried out the naming rituals secretly in Nand's cattle shed.

Garg said: "This son of Rohini will cause by his virtue, great pleasures for his near and dear ones. So his second name will be Rama. And because of excessive strength, people will call him as Bala also. Since he will unite the people also, so one of his names would be Sankarshana."

Thereafter, Garg said pointing to Yashodanandan. He has taken incarnation in every age. In the past ages, he had taken white, red and yellow complexions respectively. This time he has taken dark complexion, so he will be known as Krishna. Once he has been the son of Vasudev, so people will call him as Vasudev also. He will cause salvation of all of you, and great joy for the fellow Gopas and cows. With his help, you will overcome even the severe crises. O

Nand, This boy will be equal to Narayana in virtues, wealth, beauty, fame and influence. Foster this child with care and earnestness." Thus naming the boys as per their virtues, Garg returned to his hermitage.

16.10.9 Childhood of Lord Krshna

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, time passed in Gokul as usual. Balrama and Krishna too grew normally. Soon they began to walk on knees and palms. With their childish plays they both amused men and women folk of Gokul. Everyone took special care of them and looked after them to save them from any possible danger. Ladiesfolk were specially careful about them.

Soon afterwards, both the kids began to walk trottingly. Now their movement no longer confined within the boundary of their home. Because of his special virtues, Krishna began to lead other kids of his age group whereas his elder brother Balarama was somewhat serious in nature. Krishna specially enjoyed teasing the girls and milkmaids of Gokul. Often he would eat stealing their milk, curd and butter. At other times, He did not hesitate even to break their pitchers. In such situations the ladiesfolk used to gather in Nand's home to complain against Krishna. And every time Yashoda promised them to punish Krishna. But every time, when she proceeded to punish him, she forgot everything before his sweet, innocent smile.

One day, Balarama complained against Krishna, "Ma, the little Kanhaiya has eaten mud. Worried about Krishna's health, Yashoda scolded at him: "Tell me, O mischievous Krishna, why did you eat mud". At that moment, little Krishna's eyes were moving with fear. He made an excuse: "No Ma, I have not eaten any mud. They are telling yoou a lie. If you don't believe, me see yourself." Saying this, Krishna opened his little mouth. Yashoda peeped into his mouth and what she saw there amazed her. She could not believe it. The entire universe was visible in his little mouth. Yashoda saw strange places, entire Vraj and even herself in the little mouth of Krishna. She felt dizzy. With his illusionary powers, Lord wiped out the memory of this incidence from the mind of Yashoda, and she again immersed in love with her child.

16.10.10 Ukhal Bandan & Salvation of Yamarjun

Once, wishing to feed Krishna with butter, Yashoda began to churn milk in the morning . Very soon, Krishna too awakened and not finding the mother on her bed, He set out to search her. Soon He found her in the courtyard where she was churning the milk. He began to insist for breast feeding at once. So Yashoda stopped churning and began to breast feed Krishna. Affection played on her face. Suddenly the milk kept on the fire pot began to boil. Yashoda left Krishna in order to attend the boiling milk. But the unstiated Krishna filled with anger and broke the pitcher of curd. Then he went inside and began to eat butter, when Yashoda came back, she understood the matter and began to search him with a stick in her hand. After eating butter himself, Krishna was now feeding

the monkeys with it. Seeing the mother come in hot pursuit, Krishna jumped over the mortar and ran away. Yashoda chased him, but soon felt tired because of her bulky body.

Thereafter, Yashoda proceeded to tie Krishna as a punishment. She got a rope and tried to tie Krishna. But the rope fell short by two fingers. She joined many ropes together but the result was same. Every time the ropes fell short by two fingers. Soon, Yashoda was bathing in sweat. When Krishna saw his mother in depression, he himself tied in the ropes. Tethering little Krishna to a heavy mortar, Yashoda engaged in usual household tasks. Tethered to the mortar, Krishna glanced at the two Arjun trees, which were standing on the gate like two sentries. He resolved to salve them.

King Parikshit asked Shukdev about the trees. Shukdev said: "Parikshit, the lord of wealth Kuber had two sons Nalkubar and Manigreev. One day they were enjoying the sweet company of pretty women on the bank of Mandakini river. Just by coincidence, Devarshi Narad arrived there. Out of Shyness, the women folk at once covered themselves, but both the sons of Kuber stood boldly without feeling any shame. Indignant Narad cursed them to become trees and stay in that form for one hundred years. Narad showed kindness as well that despite being in tree forms, they would have the memory of God alive and would be salved by Lord Shri Krishna. Thus, to keep the words of his supreme devotee Narad, Lord dragged the mortar to the two Arjun trees. He walked in such a way that the mortar got stuck between the trees. Krishna then pulled the mortar and in no time the trees were uprooted. Two divine men appeared from the uprooted trees and bowed at the feet of Krishna and prayed him with pure hearts. Then they departed to their heavenly abode.

16.10.11 Migration to Vrindavana

The uprooted Arjun trees fell with thundering sound. All the people shivered with fear and felt as if lightning had struck somewhere. All the elders including Nand met together and discussed the matter. Unanimously they concluded that, of late disturbance had increased in Gokul and the circumstances were no longer conducive to raise the kids like Balarama and Krishna there. So they unanimously decided to leave Gokul and migrate to a verdant place named Vrindavana. In their opinion, Vrindavana had ample vegetation and fertility to support them and their cattles.

Thus, on an auspicious day, the entire population of Gokul set out for Vrindavana. They packed their households on bullock carts and drove their cattles in herds and started in convoy. In Vrindavana they built their houses and started their life once again.

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, verdant environment of Vrindavana, Govardhan mountain and crystal clear waters and sandy banks of Yamuna river together

filled the hearts of Balarama and Krishna with joy. Along with the fellow cowherds, they began diverse kinds of plays there.

16.10.12 Salvation of Vatsasur

One day, Balarama and Krishna were grazing their cattles on the bank of Yamuna River. A demon, meanwhile, took the guise of a calf and mixed with the herd. Obviously, he had malicious intentions. Lord Krishna had already seen the demon taking calf's guise and mixing up with the herd. He signaled Balarama and they together reached near the calf. The calf appeared particularly healthy, so Krishna and Balarama mockingly saw it with admiring eyes. Suddenly they held the calf with its hind legs and tail twirling it in air they threw it in the sky. When the demon died, they threw him on a Kath (wood-apple) tree.

16.10.13 Salvation of Bakasur

One day, all the cowherds took their cattles to a large pond to let them drink water. There they say a huge creature sitting like a hillock on the bank. They were frightened by its appearance. The creature was in fact a demon named Bakasur who had arrived there in the guise of a storke. He was himself very strong and had a long pointed bill. As soon as the cowherds drew near him, The storke hastily picked up Krishna and swallowed him. Other cowherds including Balaram were stupefied. They could not believe their eyes. But inside the beak, Lord Krishna made himself extremely hot and caused severe burning in demon's throat. So the demon could not swallow Krishna and regurgitated him, and began to hit him with his strong beak. But Lord held his beak with both his hands and tore the demon's mouth apart. And as son as the demon died, a ripple of joy surged among the cowherds.

16.10.14 Salvation of Aghasur

One day, Krishna planned a picnic near Nandanvan. So rising early in the morning, He awakened his fellow cowherds sounding a horn. Together, all the cowherds, and their cattles went to the forest. There, on the bank of Yamuna river they began to play joyfully.

Nandanvana was in fact an abode of the demon Aghasur. He was sent there by Kansa. Seeing the boys playing, he felt extremely jealous. Knowing that Krishna had killed his brothers Bakasur and sister Pootana. It seemed an ideal moment for the demon to avenge the death of his siblings. Thinking thus, the demon took guise of python and lay in the way and opening his mouth like an opening of a cave. The cowherds too fell in his trap. Thus driven by curiosity, all the cowherds entered the demon mouth one by one. When Lord Krishna saw that his friends had entered demon's mouth. He too entered it to protect them. Aghasur wanted to masticate the cowherds including lord Krishna; but the lord increased his body and choked demon throat. Now the breath of demon stopped. His eyes rolled over and at last his life left his body through

Brahmrandhra (cosmic pore). With his ambrosial eye, Lord resurrected these dead fellows and their cattles and together they came out of the demon's mouth. As soon as the demon died, a divine flame emerged from the python's mouth. It waited there sometime for God. And when lord Krishna came out, the flame mingled with him.

16.10.15 Attachment of Brahmaji

Shukdev says: Parikshit, the cowherds told the tale of Aghasur's salvation to their parents only after a year of the incidence. During that period of one year, Lord Krishna multiplied himself and took the guise of his fellow cowherd and their stock of cattles to remove the Illusion of Brahma,who was the cause of the following incidence.

After Aghasur's life mingled with God, Lord Krishna came with this fellow cowherd on the bank of Yamuna. They left their cattles to graze freely and they sat together to take their lunch. All of the cowherds tasted one-another's food, as they wanted to feed Krishna with the tasty food. Meanwhile surprised by Aghasur's salvation, Brahma too had arrived their and saw Krishna eating food defiled by the cowherds. With that sight, Brahma grew suspicious if Krishna was indeed an incarnation of lord. Thus driven by the illusion and to test the authenticity of lord's incarnation, Brahma kidnapped all the cattles first and when Krishna went out to search the cattles Brahma kidnapped and concealed the cowherds also. Soon lord Krishna understood the craftiness of Brahma, so he multiplicated himself into his fellow cowherds and cattles. Replicas resembled truly to the cowherds in appearance, complexion, nature, activities, voice, sticks and even in costumes. The replicas remain in existence for complete one year.

Back there, when Brahma returned after hiding the cowherds and the cattles, he was stunned to see the cowherds and cattles as usual. Brahma was feeling dizzy when lord bestowed his grace on him. Brahma saw Narayana in every dust particle. Brahma therefore bowed his head at the feet of lord and said: "O lord, I submit before you. You can be won only with devotion and not by ego. No one can know your omnipresent appearance. Thus praying and worshipping lord Narayana, Brahma returned to his abode. Shukdev says: The cowherds remained separated from God for one year. But they felt as if only half a second had passed because of the illusionary influence of God. That is why they related the incidence of Aghasurs killing to their parents only after a year it took place.

16.10.16 Salvation of Dhenukasur

When Krishna and Balarama entered sixth year of their ages, they got the permission to take the cattles out for grazing. Along with their fellow cowherds the two brothers too began to take their cattle to Vrindavana. Thus they sanctified the earth of Vrindavana with their pious feet. Seeing the beauty of Vrindavana, with beautiful, colourful flowers and sweet fruits, Lord Krishna felt

overjoyed. He then used to graze his cattles at the foothills of Govardhan and on the banks of Yamuna River. Playing flute was his favourite pass time. One day Krishna's beloved friend Sudama said: Kanhaiya, there is a beautiful forest name Talvana. It has uncountable numbers of trees laden with ripe fruits. But a formidable demon Dhenukasur guards that forest, He is very strong. So no one, even animals and birds, doesn't go there. But we are tempted to eat those sweet delicious fruits. If you and Daau (Balarama) wish, we may go there and eat those delicious fruits."

Thus hearing this, Krishna and Balarama guided all of them to Talvana. There they shook the trees and in no time a heap of ripe, delicious fruits gathered under the trees. All the cowherds began to eat fruits. While eating, they were also making lot of noises. Disturbed by the sound of fruits falling and noise of the cowherds, the demon Dhenukasur arrived there as a donkey. He was braying loudly and tried to hit Balarama, but Balrama caught him by his hind legs and threw him in the air. The demon died in an instance. Since that day, everyone visited Talvana fearlessly and the cattles grazed there freely.

16.10.17 Grace on Kalia, the Naga

One day, Bala-Krishna arrived on the banks of Yamuna with their friends. Balarama was not with them that day. The water of the river Yamuna was toxicated by the poison of Kaliy- The Naga. It was exceptionally hot that day and all the cowherds and cattles were very thirsty. So without giving any thought, they all drank the water from Yamuna and died. But Lord Krishna resurrected them by his ambrosial sight.

Then lord Krishna decided to purify the waters of Yamuna. Thus tying a cloth round his waist, Krishna climbed a Cadamb tree and jumped into the river. In the water the lord started playing and splashing water. Soon the waves began to rise high. When Kaliy- the Naga heard the noise. He got extremely angry and appeared before Krishna. He saw a beautiful, tender, dark complexioned boy playing joyfully in the waters. He stung him and tied him in his spirals. Tied in the spirals of Kaliy, lord became absolutely motionless. Seeing Krishna in death like situation, all the cowherds and even the cows felt very sorry. Just then lord freed himself from the hold of Kaliy. Then a game of hide and seek began between them. Lord dodged the Naga for a long time. Thereafter he rode on Kaliy's hood and began to dance there.

The followers of God, like Gandharvas etc. began to play Mridang, Dhol etc. to give him a company. Tired from the blows of lord's feet, Kaliy soon began to vomit blood. Naga's wives began to pray God, "O lord, your incarnation is to punish the evil ones for their sins. You have shown your grace on us also. We are fortunate to have a sight and touch of your feet. Pity O lord. This Naga can no longer bear your momentum. He will die. We are all your slaves. Kaliy is our lord. Kindly forgive him." With kindness, lord released Kaliy, who prayed thus: O lord in your creation we snakes represent Tamoguna (dark virtues). We are

confused by your illusions." Lord dictated Kaliy to migrate with his family to Ramanakdweep. Since then water of Yamuna became pure for humans and animals.

16.10.18 Drinking of Davanal (Forest Fire)

After defeating Kaliy, Lord Krishna and all other people of Vraj felt extremely tired. They were very hungry and thirsty also. So they did not go back to Vrindavana, but stayed on the bank of Yamuna in the night. Because of intense heat of summer, surrounding forests had been shrivelled. At midnight those shrivelled forests caught fire and the sleeping people were engulfed by it. They awakened startled and took shelter at Krishna. Seeing their horrified appearance, Lord Krishna drank the infernal forest fire and thus saved the lives of innocent people who had rested their live's at him with faith.

16.10.19 Salvation of Pralambasur

One day, Balarama and Krishna were playfully grazing their cattles along with other cowherds in the forests. When a demon Pralamb arrived there with an intention of kidnapping Krishna and Balarama. The demon had come in the guise of a cowherd, but the God easily recognised him. They accepted his proposal of friendship, but were thinking about the way for his salvation. God thereafter summoned all his friends and said: "Pals, today we shall divide ourselves in to two teams and play joyfully. Thus the teams were divided and each team chose Krishna and Balarama as its captain respectively. It was stipulated that the members of defeated team would carry the members of winner team on their back up to the place pointed by them. Thus the game began and soon both the teams reached a secluded place.

At one time, the team headed by Balarama won. So the members of Krishna's team were to carry them on their back. Demon Pralambasur offered Balarama a ride on his back. Balarama agreed to ride on the demon's back; but as soon as he rode on the demon's back, the demon galloped. But he could not go far for not being able to bear Balarama's weight. Them the demon regained his huge formidable size and tried to escape by flying. First Balarama felt terrorized but soon he realised his real powers and hit on the demon's head with a powerful fist. The blow shattered demon's head and he fell on earth dead like a huge mountain.

16.10.20 Venugeet

Shri Shukdevji says: "O king, most of the time of Lord Krishna's boyhood passed in Vrindavana. There he grazed cattles and played flute. His flute had a divine, enchanting sound.The Gopis (girls) gathered around him under the influence of enchanting tunes."

They also heard the enchanting Venu geet that fills one hearts with the memory of Bhagwad. One of the girl said to her friend: "O dear friend, Having the

privilege of seeing Lords beauty and receving his kindness is the real salvation. Another girl said: "O friend, what penance this flute had observed that it has got a closer contact with lips of Nandnandan (an epithet for Krishna). Even the siblings of this flute, trees and other vegetation's are pleased with its fortune and are hence showering their leaves and flowers on him." One more said: "O friend, look, even Bhagwadi Lakshmi has left her luxurious abode in Vaikunth and arrived in Vrindavana to have a look of lord Devakinandan." A Gopi expressed her jealousy: "Even this doe is better than us, O friends, look how engrossed is she looking at God, that her eyes are not blinking."

Hearing the sweet enchanting tunes of flute even the heavenly elves gather in the sky over Vrindavana. They also see the beauty of lord Krishna and showered the flowers of their braids on him. Even the cows forgot grazing when then heard the enchanting music of flute. The calves too forgot drinking milk and began to look at lord Krishna with joy. This is the real devotion for lord Krishna. You have to forget yourself in order to find him. Condition of girls of Vrindavana was exactly the same. After having the sight of lord Krishna they remembered nothing; not even the way back to home. They stood in the forests in a trance, completely tired, unaware of their self.

A girl said pointing to the fauna: "Look O friends, look at these birds. Do you know that these birds were the saints and sages in their previous births. In this birth also they are sitting in a state of trance. Look they have forgotten their knowledge hearing the sweet enchanting music of the flute. And look at Yamunaji. She is also ale to contain her exhilaration. She is eagerly spalshing her waves to wash lords feet. Yet another girl said: "Look friends the clouds cannot see their lord scorching in the sun. So they have covered the sun and shaded Lord Krishna. Now they are drizzling as if showering petals." A girl said: "Friends, look, these Bheelanis are better than us. They have such a strong urge of Krishna's sight that when Govind returns home, they smear their body with dusts of his feet. Blessed is this mountain which has dedicated its entire self in the feet of Brajnandan and feels overjoyed. It is his supreme devotee. Kanhaiya has infused even non-living things with life by his sweet tunes of flute.

16.10.21 Stealing of Clothes

The unmarried girls of Vrindavana felt as if their lives were dedicated to Lord Krishna. Each of them wished heartly to have lord Krishna as her husband. So in order to get their desire fulfilled, all of the spinster girls of Vraj began to take bath in Yamuna early in morning of Hemant season and worshipped goddess Katyayani. When MadanMohan learned that the spinsters girls wished to marry him. He went to see them at dawn. The girls were bathing naked in the river; Their clothes were kept on the bank. Lord Krishna stealthy took those clothes and climbed on a Cadamb tree. Lord had not stolen their clothes with malicious intentions. He had stolen them to remove their flaws and make them realize their real appearance that they were not mere girls, but pure souls. Without realization of the real self, one can not experience the God.

The girl were in fact the hymns of Vedas, Sadhana, Siddhis, Sages and Brahmvidyas (Vedas) themselves, that took the guise of girls to enjoy the vicinity of God. God removed their clothes that symbolized lust. Because of the lords grace they all were able to enjoy God's company. Shukdevji says: "O Parikshit, Thus Lord Krishna removed the shyness of the girls of Vraj through his sweet talks. He derided at them, made them dance like puppets and even stole their clothes when they were bathing naked, but they did not deter his actions. Instead they felt overjoyed by the close presence of their beloved Kanha.

16.10.22 Lifting of Govardhan Mountain

Shukhdevji says: "O Parikshit one day, Balarama and Krishna saw that many delicious kind of sweetmeats were being cooked at home. With curiosity and politeness, they asked Nand and other elders: "Father, which festival are you preparing for? Which god will be worshipped? What purpose will such worship serve? Nand Baba explained: "Sons Devaraj Indra is the god of clouds. It is because of Indra's grace we get rain. So these materials are being prepared to worship Indra."

Krishna said: Father every creature in the world enjoys comforts or suffers as per his fate. None of the gods can change the results. Action is prime in the world. One gets the results as per his actions. Even Indra is God as a result of his action. Any one who performs one hundred Ashvamegh Yagyas, becomes Indra. But even after performing crores of Ashvmegh Yagyas one can not get a stay in Vraj. It is the duty of Indra to cause rain. So it will rain even if you don't worship Indra. But to feed the poors and satisfy them with clothes and other gifts is real worship. By their blessing, we shall be more happier. I desire that with all these materials we should worship Giriraj Govardhan and distribute the prasad among the poors. With which their souls will be sated and will have the grace of God.

Thus Lord Krishna told his father that all the people should worship unitedly and unitedly they should receive prasad. If you are ready to do as per my desire, its all right, otherwise I will not worship your haughty god, nor receive his prasad.

16.10.23 Indignation of Indra

Thus convinced by Kanhaiya's wise reasoning, all the gopas agreed to him. Nand Baba said, "O Krishna, we are making all these preparation for you only and we will do as you say. We will worship Govardhan. For us Govardhan is also like a god. It gives us grass, water, and fuel etc., which are necessary for our lives. Thus with lords, consent, they dropped their plan to worship Indra and resolved to worship Govardhan faithfully.

16.10.24 Worship of Goverdhan

On the Purnima (full moon) day in the month of Kartik (November) all the Gopas (people of Vraj region) gathered near mount Govardhan. During the night all of them circumambulated the mountain. Lord invoked the Ganges by his wish and bathed Govardhan with her water.Then they put vermilion on it, offered basil-leaves, flowers etc and worshipped it. Brahmins recited hymns in its praise. To make the people believe in their rituals, Lord Krishna himself appeared on the mountain in huge form and exclaimed: "I am Giriraj (the king of the mountain) and began to eat the offerings. But he as a child was still among the villagers who faithfully bowed before the mountain. Among them, the child Krishna said: "look, what a surprise Giriraj has appeared himself and bestowed his grace on us. He has accepted our worship." There after all the Gopas distributed Prasad among themselves and felt supremely satisfied.

16.10.25 Angry Retaliation of Indra

Shukdevji sayd: Parikshit, when Indra learned that the Gopas had stopped worshipping him, he grew outrageous. In anger, he ordered the clouds to rain torrentially over Vraj and cause heavy flood in Vraj region. In no time dense clouds gathered over Vraj. Soon there was lighting thunder, darkness and storm all around. Then it rained torrentially. All the people took refuge at Lord Krishna and prayed him to save them from the anger of Indra. Lord Krishna said: "Those who regard me as there, are mine and I am theirs, So there is no need to worry for you."

Saying this, Lord lifted Giriraj on his little finger and called all the people of Vraj along with their cattles under the lee of Govardhan. Then he ordered his wheel Sudarshan to absorb the water of the clouds so that not even a single drop could fall on earth. Thus for seven days continuously Lord balanced Govardhan on the little finger.Thus Lord Krishna also came to be known as Giridhari. People who had gathered around him, just kept on seeing Lords moon-like face and hence did not feel thirsty or hungry.In fact the comforts those people got during those seven days are beyond verbal description. Lord held Govardhan on one hand, and conch in the other, while with the remaining two hands He began to play this flute. Hearing the tunes of his flute, all the people of Vraj began to dance with joy. After the rains stopped, all of them returned to their homes.

16.10.26 Ceremonial Bath of Lord

When Indra learned about the happenings in Vraj, he soon realised his mistake. Indra himself reached Vraj and begged lord for his pardon. Then he gave lord a ceremonial bath with the milk of Surabhi. For protecting the cows,Thus the Lord also got one more name "Govind".

16.10.27 Raas Leela

Shukdevji related to Parikshit the tale of Kamadev's humiliation. Shridhar Swami calls Raasleela as Kama-vijay leela (defeating of Kamadeva- Hindu

equivalent of cupid). Jagad guru Ballabhacharyaji decribes it as Lords Divy Vihar (divine enjoyment). The purpose of describing this tale is just that common people should reflect on the selfless love of Gopis for Lord Krishna and experience the love of God for them as well.

Lord is an embodiment of Rasa (Pleasure):

"RASOVAISAH | RASAMHYEVAL ABDHVAANANDI BHAVATI |"

After conquering Brahma and other gods, ego of Kamadev had surged to great heights. He, therefore, requested God to quench his thirst for war. God invited Kamadev to visit Vrindavana on the night of Sharad Purnima (Full moon night) in season preceding winter), and told him that on that divine night. He would enjoy the company of crores of Gopis. "If I have slightest passion for any of them, you will win, otherwise you will lose."

That night Lord Krishna added more divinity, more brilliance to it with a resolution of Raas with the help of Yogmaya (personified illusion). It was a perfect night for the purpose - flowers bloomed in Vrindavana, full moon shone, and gentle, cool breeze blew from the banks of river Yamuna. Amidst this stimulating ambience Lord Krishna began to play an enchanting tune on his flute. The tune attracted Gopis,their passion surged to its zenith and under the influence of love for lord Krishna and as if in trance, all of them ran to meet their beloved Kanhaiya leaving all their fear, Bondages, patience and shyness behind. Some of them were intercepted by their husbands and dragged back to home. But only their physical bodies stayed put, their souls reached Vrindavana.

In Vrindavana on the bank of Yamuna, Gopis saw Vrindavana Vihari (epithet for Krishna) near their familiar cadamb tree. Yogmaya adorned all the Gopis from tip to toe. In fact those Gopis were not ordinary women.

Parikshit asked: "Gopis had not regarded Krishna as Parbrahma. What was the basis for their passion then? Shukdevji said: "When a wretched person like Shishupal, who always abused lord Krishna could find supreme position, there should be no doubt for Gopis who had such a profound passion for Lord." So Gopis arrived and gathered around Lord Krishna.

To test their devotion and to enhance the honour of Kamadev, Krishna said to them: "O Gopis, the pure ones, it is not fit for you to stay here at this hour of night. Go and serve your husbands. Your duties must be first to your husband's children and cows. They will be waiting for you eagerly. Go and console them. You can gain me by hearing, reciting, seeing etc. You need not sit here. Go to your homes."

Gopis, however said: "Govind, we have come to you leaving all the mundane lusts behind. Now going back is like ruining over lives.It is the greatest misfortune if someone returns to mundane affairs even after being at your

feet." These words that reflected divine feelings of Gopis pleased Lord. He began to enjoy their company. But a feeling of ego began to creep in the minds of Gopis because of lord's closeness. They began to assume themselves as highly fortunate. To remove their ego, Lord disappeared right among them.

16.10.28 Pitiable Conditions of Gopis in Lord's Absence

After the disappearance of God, Gopis were perplexed. Their hearts burned with desire. They had dedicated their entire selves in the feet of Lord. They were entirely merged in the love of Krishna. Thus driven by passion, Gopis began to search Lord Krishna. They asked trees, creepers, vegetations for the whereabouts of their beloved. They then spotted His footprints at one place. Footprints of Radha were also there. 'Indeed He would have carried her, that great fortunate one, on His shoulders.' They thought.

Lord had indeed, after disappearing from amidst Gopis, taken Radha to an isolated place. She had then began to think herself superior to other Gopis. So at one place, she said: "O Lord, I can't walk now. My tender feet are tired. Kindly carry me on your shoulders to wherever you wish." At her request, Lord Krishna agreed to carry her on his shoulder. But as soon as she proceeded to ride, Lord disappeared from there also. Now, Radhaj began to cry and wail and fainted. At the same time, other Gopis also reached there and found Radha lying unconscious on the ground. All of them including Radha then returned to the bank of Yamuna and began to wait for Krishna's appearance.

16.10.29 Gopika Geet

O Lord, your incarnation has increased the glory of Vrajbhumi. Even the glory of Vaikunth, goddess Lakshmi herself came to stay in Vraj. Govind we have dedicated our lives at your feet. Now we are searching you everywhere. O MadanMohan, kindly show your beautiful, face once. Prananath, your eyes, that are even more beautiful than the lotus that bloom in ponds, is pricking our hearts. We are all your slaves. If you kill us by your separation, will not you be criticised. O Purushottam, you have protected us on many occasions. You are the remover of miseries of Vraj people. O Lord, you are not the son of Yashoda only, but you are the soul of all the living beings. At the request of Brahma, you have arrived on earth to remove her burden. Why don't you protect us, our lives are in danger because of your separation.

O Lord, your tales are like ambrosia. Your ambrosial tales pacify those who are inflicted with mundane obstacles, and sorrows. They are indeed great and fortunate who recite your tales.

O Purushottam, for the musics of your flute we gave up everything - our husbands, children, social bindings everything. We even dedicated our lives for the sake of your love. Now nothing amuses us except you. We are living, only to have a sight of you; now you are wandering from forest to forest with your tender feet, which even we did not bear in our hearts for the fears of hurting

them. How much would they be suffering? We are fainting in your worry. O the dearest one, we were yours, we are yours and we shall be yours forever." Saying these words Gopis burst into tears.

16.10.30 Reappearance of the Lord Among the Gopis

Shukdev says: Parikshit, when the beloved Gopis burst into tears, Krishna's patience gave away. His heart melted at their condition and He appeared amidst them. A sweet smile played on his beautiful face. He wore a garland of fresh Vaijayanti flowers and yellow clothes. His beauty could have moved even Kamadev. Seeing their beloved Kanha once again amidst them, Gopis got a new lease of life. All of them began to embrace Lord and thus quench the fire of separation that was burning their bodies.

Thereafter, along with the beauties of Vraj, Lord came to the bank of Yamuna. Gopis put their queries before him for solution. Lord said: "O beloved Gopis, I do not reciprocate to the desire of my beloved ones for physical love. Because of it their conscience remains always engrossed in me. Hence, I take to hiding even after meeting so that you could feel complete imbibement in me.

16.10.31 Maha-Raas

From the words of the Lord, Gopis forgot the pains of separation. From the closeness of their beloved, their lives were successful now. With those Gopis, Lord Krishna started Maharaas on the pious banks of river Yamuna. All the gods gathered in sky to witness that divine festival. Gopis were even more fortunate than Lakshmi. But even amidst crores of Gopis, who were eager to devote their everything to Him, Lord completely refrained from desires, feelings and even actions. Thus Lord defeated even Kamadev and removed his ego.

16.10.32 Salvation of Sudarshan & Shankhchuda

Shukdev says: O Parikshit, once on the occasion of Lord Shivaratri, Nand Baba and all other Gopas drove their carts with families and reached Ambikavana on a pilgrimage tour. There they took bath in the river Saraswati and with devotion worshiped lord Lord Shiva and Parvati. They also observed day long fast and decided to pass their night on the bank of Saraswati. But that place was inhabited by a huge python. During the night: the python emerged and caught hold of Nand's leg. Nandbaba cried loudly. All the Gopas gathered around him. He cried again: "Kanhaiya, This snake is all set to strangulate me. Save me."

Lord touched the python with his feet and instaneously, the python vanished. In its place appeared a divine-looking human. He said: "O Lord, I was a Vidyadhar named Sudarshan. I was so much obsessed with my beauty, youth, luxury and comforts that I used to insult others. One day I had derided at the ugly appearance of the sage Angira. So indignantly he cursed me to become a python. But, pleased by my realization of mistake, he had told that when God

himself would touch me, I would regain my original appearance." Thereafter, Sudarshan went round the God, worshiped Him and with his permission, departed to his abode.

On another occasion, Lord arrived in Vrindavana during Vasant Ritu (spring Season). There He took part in Vasantik Raas (Raas of spring season) with the Gopis. During Raas itself, a demon Shankhchur tried to escape away kidnapping some of the Gopis. A stampede resulted among Gopis. Hearing their noise, Lord ran after the demon, carrying a huge Sal (shorea) tree in his hands. In no time He overtook the demon and killed him by just one blow. He picked up the gem from demon's head and handed it to Balarama.

16.10.33 Salvation of Arishtasur

Once, Kansa sent a demon Arishtasur to Vrindavana. The demon arrived there in a bull's guise. That huge bull came to Vrindavana and began to terrorize the people with his loud sound. Seeing the bull, Balaram said to Krishna: "Kanhaiya, I have never seen such a huge bull before." All the people began to cry for help. Lord consoled them and challenged the bull demon: O fool, why are you terrorizing these cows and cowherds? I am going to shatter your ego." The challenge from God pinched the demon. Tapping his hooves angrily, the demon attacked God. He wished to gore Him, but God held his horns and pushed him back. Then kicking the demon God killed him in no time.

16.10.34 Kans sends Akrurji

After the killing of Arishthasur, Devarishi Narad visited Kansa and asked: "O Kansa, the girl who had slipped form your hand was in fact the daughter of Yashoda. Krishna and Balaram, who are staying in Vrindavana, are infact the sons of Devaki and Rohini respectively. Because of your fear, Vasudev has kept them under the supervision of his friend Nand. Those two boys have killed the demons sent by you." Hearing these words, Kansa shook with anger and put Vasudev and Devaki in prison again.

Thereafter he called his minister Akrur and asked him to set out at once for Gokul. He said to Akrur: "Akrurji, you are an old friend and well-wisher of mine, Go to Gokul and bring the sons of Vasudev, who are staying at Nand's home. Invite them to visit Mathura, to witness the festivities of Dhannsh-yagya." Akrur understood Kansa's intentions, but feared that if he refused, that demon would kill him. So he decided to visit Gokul, and also have the oppurtunity of seeing God. He was feeling overwhelmed by the mere thought of it. Next day, he set out on a grand chariot to meet his supreme Lord in Gokul.

Meditating in the feet of Lord, Akrur was heading towards Vrindavana. He was feeling himself as the most fortunate one for he was sure to have a sight of Lord. Thus obsessed with many kinds of devotional feelings, Akrur alighted from the chariot at the border of Vrindavana and started walking. He found it unjust

to ride a chariot on the land of Vrindavana where lord Krishna treaded. By the time, he reached Vrindavana, Lord Krishna and Balarama had returned home after grazing their cattles. Seeing them, Akrur fell at their feet. Both the brothers raised Akrur and addressed him as "Chacha" (uncle),and escorted him into the house.

Akrur was given a warm welcome and treatment there. After the dinner, they assembled in Nand's drawing room. Nand inquired about the reason of his sudden arrival. Akrur said: "Kansa is organizing a wrestling competition in Mathura. He has invited all the big and small kings to the competitions. He has invited you with Krishna and Balarama as well. Beautiful Mathura is worth seeing. Gullible Nand felt pleased by Akrur's talking and said: "King Kansa has shown a great honour to me. He has sent invitation only to other kings, but has sent his minister to call me and a golden chariot for my kids." So it was announced in Gokul that all the people would go to Mathura the next day and witness the festivities there.

16.10.35 Departure of Krshna-Balarama for Mathura

When the Gopis heard about Krishna leaving Gokul to visit Mathura, they began to wail and cry. They were getting so much restless by the news that, they felt, their lives would end before the sunrise. They started imprecating fate that it had no kindness. First it provided them with a closer contact with their beloved Kanha, now it was causing a long separation from him. Some of Gopis even begged for death, they felt it better than living without Kanha. All the Gopis kept on crying and wailing nightlong.

Mother Yashoda awoke early in the morning next day. She churned out butter and adding Mishri (sugar candies), she took it to Krishna to feed him. But there she found that both Krishna and Balarama were getting ready to set out for Mathura. They held mother's feet and said: "Pardon us, O mother, we are going to Mathura." These words disturbed Yashoda. She ran and fell at Akrur's feet and said: "I am your slave. O Akrur, please do not take my beloved sons to Mathura. They are inseparable from my heart. Why Kansa has summoned them to Mathura. O Akrur, go and tell him to take everything from us, but spare our sons. We are also ready to live in jail, but can't lose our beloved sons." Akrur consoled Yashoda. "Bhabhi (sister-in-law), don't worry. These two brothers are going to Mathura to witness the festivities there and will return soon to comfort your heart." Yashoda said: "Akrurji, Mathura is a town of gold and both of my sons are too young yet to be needed there for any reason."

Touching the feet of Nand and Yashoda, both the brothers said: "Father, mother, we will definitely return. Presently we wish to see the grandeur of Mathura." Meanwhile all the Gopis and Gopas had gathered there. Crying and wailing, the Gopis said: "You are very Cruel, O Akrur, who named you as Akrur. You have come here to lacerate our hearts." Second Gopi said: "No friend, it is not a fault of Akrur. Our complaints are with Shyamsundar. We left everything, our

husbands, children, our homes and dedicated our entire selves in your service. And now you are deserting us so ruthlessly. We have no support for our life except you, O Madhusadan." Saying this, all the Gopis burst into tears again.

All the Gopas, including Shridama surrounded the chariot and said: "O Krishna we had not even dreamt that you would desert us so ruthlessly. O Kanhaiya we have seen with our eyes that even Indra, Varuna, Sanakadi and Brahma bow before you. But we have never regarded you as God. We regarded you as our friend. Are you angry with us? O my childhood friend Kanhaiya, we request you, we will never abuse you in future. If you were intending to go, why did you, then save us from the infernal forest fire. Why did you save from the deluging rains? We cannot live without you. Tell us O benevolent friend, When will you return." Lord Krishna consoled them all and took many of them with Him. The chariot began to move. As long as the flag of the chariot remained visible, people kept on crying and wailing. Even the eyes of Akrur filled with tears. Lord asked him: "Kaka, why are you weeping?" Akrur replied: "O Lord, Kansa is the great sinner. I feel he will try to torment you by all means. So, my heart says, that I should take you back to Vrindavana, because if Kansa did any harm to you, their spirits will curse me for ever."

16.10.36 Appearance of the Lord before Arjun

Hearing Akrur's words, Lord understood that when he had arrived in Vraj, he was afflicted with a feeling of majesty. But now, it has been replaced by affection now. He, therefore decided to remove his dilemma. Thus, Lord said to him: "Kaka, Mathura is still some distance away. So you take a bath in Yamuna. We brothers are waiting for you in the chariot."

As soon as Akrur took a dip in Yamuna, Lord showed him a sight of His abode Vaikunth and his Narayana's appearance in which, he was holding conch, wheel, mace and lotus in each of his four hands and was lying on the bed of Sheshnaga. With folded hands, Akrur prayed to lord: "O lord, you are the reason for the existence of Brahma and the Universe. O Lord, I pray at your feet again and again. Now I recognise you. You are the one who took the incarnations of Matsya, Kachchap, Varah, Narsinh, Vamana, Rama etc. Thus after bath and worship, Akrur returned to the chariot. Lord Krishna understood that now a devotional feeling had arisen in the mind of Akrur for Narayana. Lord asked: "Your condition seems miserable. Did you see anything extra-ordinary under water?" Akrur said: "O Lord, now bestow your grace on me. Kindly come to my home and accept my hospitality."

16.10.37 Arrival in Mathura

After the departure of Akrur, Nandbaba too set out for Mathura along with the Gopas. On the way itself, they caught up with Krishna and Balaram. All of them then reached Mathura together. There they stayed in a garden. After sometime, with Nand's permission, both the brothers set out to see the city of Mathura.

Mathura was indeed a beautiful town. All the residents of Mathura thronged on roads, roofs and attices to have a sight of Krishna and Balrama.

16.10.38 Grace on Kubja

On the way, they met a pretty but hunched women. She introduced herself as Kubja, the maid of Kansa. Her duty was to smear the members of the royal family with sandal-wood paste. God asked her if she would smear him with sandal paste. Kubja said: "O ManMohan, I see no one more fitting than you for the sandal paste." Thus she smeared Lord's forehead with saffron. On Dau's forehead she smeared musk containing sandal paste, other Gopas smeared all the remaining sandal paste on their heads.
Lord then, put His feet on Kubja's and holding her chin gave her head a slight jerk. And in no time, Kubja's hunch was gone and she turned into a pretty woman. She begged lord for His love. The Lord promised her a meeting in future, and proceeded ahead.

16.10.39 Breaking of the Bow

After salving Kubja, Lord Krishna and other Gopas moved ahead. At a place they saw a huge bow kept on a high stage. Many strong men were guarding it. Lord entered the canopy and easily lifted the bow and broke it into pieces. There was a big applause from all around. Dau said: "Krishna, now the crowd will increase here, so let us escape in time. Thus, both the brothers and their friends beat a retreat to their camp. There they rested for night. There in Mathura, breaking of the bow had frightened Kansa. He could not sleep during the night. Even in his dreams, he saw nothing, but Krishna everywhere around him.

16.10.40 Killing of the Elephant

Early in the morning, Kansa summoned his minister and ordered him to make Kuvalayapeed, the elephant to stand in the centre of the main gate. He thought that the elephant would kill both the boys if they dared to enter the fort through main gate. Back there in the garden, Krishna and Balarama set out in wrestlers guise for the fort. At the gate, seein an elephant blocking the passage, they asked mahout loudly: "O Mahout, why have you made the elephant stand in the centre of the gate. Move it either ahead or back." But instead of moving the elephant out of the passage, the mahout steered it right on them. But before elephant could attack them, Balarama caught its trunk, while Krishna caught its tail. Both the brothers then dragged the elephant out of the gate and lofted it in the air. The elephant fell on the ground with a loud thud and died on the spot.

16.10.41 Salvation of Wrestlers

Kansa felt very nervous by the news of elephant's killing. Before he could take stock of the situation, Lord Krishna and Balaram arrived in the amphi- theatre. The spectators present in the amphitheatre saw Lord as per their feelings. The

menfolk saw Lord as a Jewel among the men. Womenfolk saw him as an incarnation of Kamadev. Cowherds saw their natural friend in Lord, while to Kansa He appeared as his death. But to his mother and father, Devaki and Vasudev and to Nand, Krishna and Balarama appeared as small kids. Sages and ascetics saw nothing but metaphysical coming in boys' guise. Learned ones sighted His cosmic form while to Yadavas He appeared as their tutelery God.

As soon as the Lord and Balarama arrived in the ring, the wrestlers, who were already present there, stood up like springs. A wrestler Chanur dragged Krishna and one named Mushtik dragged Balarama into the ring. They said to them: "Both of you and we are the subjects of the great king Kansa. It is our duty to please our king with our art and skill. More over we will receive many rewards also."

Krishna said: "O wrestlers, you please fight among yourselves. We are boys yet, so we shall witness your fight from a distance." Chanur said: "No you are neither boy nor teenagers. You are stronger than the strongest. You have just killed an elephant which was stronger than thousand elephants." Thus, both the brothers were compelled to wrestle with the royal wrestlers. Mushtik was beaten on the ground by Balarama so hard that he died at once on the spot. Krishna similarly killed second wrestler Chanur. All the remaining wrestlers met similar fate one by one. The massive crowd present there applauded them joyfully.

16.10.42 Salvation of Kansa

Seeing the shameful defeat of his wrestlers, Kansa infuriated with anger and proclaimed: "Tie all the opponents; tie Ugarsen, Devaki, Vasudev, Nand in ropes and bring them before me." Lord Krishna could not tolerate this and in a single jump, He reached on the stage where Kansa was present. Lord Krishna caught him by hair and said: "O Kansa, once you have caught a helpless woman by hair, I have avenged that insult. Now you will receive the fruits for your atrocities." Saying this, Lord began to twirl Kansa catching him by hair, and threw him down from the stage. Then Lord jumped once again and landed on the chest of Kansa. Kansa died instantaneously. Thus, Kansa who was an incarnation of the demon Kalnemi received salvation. Lord Krishna then, released his parents from the prison and crowned his maternal grand father Ugrasen as the king of Mathura.

16.10.43 Yagyopavit of Krshna-Balarama

After the successful completion of all the royal ceremonies, the consecration of Krishna and Balarama was carried out. Thereafter, they came to stay at the hermitage of sage Sandipani for formal education. Extraordinarily brilliant Krishna successfully learned all the knowledge in short period of time. Then, as Gurudakshina (paying respect to the teacher) Krishna brought back his dead sons from the abode of Yamaraj. Taking his convocational bath, thereafter, Lord Krishna returned to Mathura. There, though living among royal luxuries and

grandeur Lord Krishna remained indifferent. Memory of his sentimental, beloved devotees friend and other people of Vraj kept on pricking him.

16.10.44 Sending Udhav as Messenger

Savant Uddhav, the son of Yadava's minister Brihaspati was an intimate friend of Lord Krishna. Only he had the permission to enter Lord's sanctum. Seeing his friend Krishna in remorse, Uddhav asked: "Mathuranath, you seem to be upset. What is troubling you?" Lord Krishna replied: "Uddhava, I feel perplexed. I remember my days in Vrindavana. Please go to Vrindavana and get the news regarding Gopis there. Also give them my message." Thus Lord Krishna donned Uddhav in his attire and sent him to Vraj in his chariot.
There he stayed at Nand's home. At night, Uddhav enquired about Nand and Yashoda's well being and about Vraj in general. That whole might passed in chatting.

16.10.45 Bhramar Geet

Next day, when the Gopis got the news of Uddhav's arrival, they thronged in and around Nand's residence. They recognized the chariot parked in front of the gate. It was the same chariot on which Krishna and Balarama had departed for Mathura. First they thought that their beloved Krishna had returned. But their belief did not last long. Some of them opined that Akrur might have come again. But what for?
But then someone informed that it was Uddhav, Krishna's Savant friend, who had come to preach them about metaphysical knowledge. Soon afterwards, Uddhav came out and spoke out loud: "O Gopis, listen to the preaching of Uddhav." But instead of listening to him, Gopis covered their ears. Feeling insulted, Uddhav expressed his dissatisfaction over their behaviour. Gopis said to him: O gentleman, firstly we are not familiar with you, secondly we have no capacity to hear your preaching. Yes if you wish to give us a message of our most beloved; thousand of ears are eager to hear that." Uddhav then introduced himself as the intimate friend of Lord Krishna.

Knowing his identify Gopis welcome and treated Uddhav warmly. Uddhav then began to say again: "O Gopis, the person, whom you are declaring as your beloved friend, in fact has no mother, no father. He has no form, no colour and no body. He is above all, non-existing all pervasive and the giver of joy. He is never separate from his devotee and beloved ones. All of you, too, feel the presence of that Supreme Being and be happy forever." Gopis said: "Uddhav, as long as Ghanashyam stayed with us, we saw endless virtues in him. But only within six months of his stay in Mathura, you wiped out all of his virtues and turned him virtueless.

Tell us with which mouth did he eat butter, with which hand did he break our pitchers, with which feet did he pasture cows in the forests and with which feet did he dance on the hood of Kaliy. Was he another Krishna?"

Harsh reaction of the Gopis startled Uddhav. He began to think where he had been caught. His knowledge of Vedant was proving ineffective on the Gopis. Who are sunk in so much love. On the other hand, Gopis too were feeling embarassed for treating the guest bitterly. But they were also not prepared to listen to such preaching that condemned love. Moreover, they had let out their long accumulating feeling.

Meanwhile a bumblebee perched at Radha's feet mistaking them for lotus. Pointing to it, all the Gopis said: "Beware O bumblebee, beware if you dare to touch the feet of our Radha. It appears that you are a disciple of Krishna. There is now no secret regarding the virtues and actions of your friend. But it is good that he and you tied in friendship. You are black and your friend has a black heart. Virtues of both of you are same.

First He imbibed us in His love; then left us ruthlessly forever. He is not sorry for us. But why does Lakshmi serves in those feet? She must be careful, lest she should be deceived like us. O bumblebee you also appear to be a polymath who has come here to preach us. But you won't get an audience in Braj. You should better go to Mathura.
There is one Kubja go and relate your tale to her. You will receive ample donations from her. What will you get from the Gopis here? They have already lost their mental balance, because of their separation from the beloved Krishna. If you have come to ask, why we loved Krishna. O bumblebee, we have no knowledge. But we know that our love for Krishna was not a mistake. Even the goddess Lakshmi does not leave His feet for a moment. Why should we leave his feet then? But O bumblebee, have you really come to convince us. When He could not come out of shame, He sent you to console us - the deaf and dumb Gopis, But be careful if you put your head at the feet of Radha.

Get away, we have already seen enough of flattery and flirtation of your friend. Deserting our affection for ephemeral things, we loved that eternal one. but He too abandoned us. Can you guess about our condition? Tell us, O Uddhav, shall we ever get the sight of Shri Krishna again?

Hearing the tragic tale of the Gopis, Uddhav too felt very sorry for them. He felt as if Mathuranath, lord Krishna was indeed neglecting those Gopis. Uddhav stayed in Vrindavana for six months. There he saw every place, every spot where lord Krishna had played once. When he was returning to Mathura, mother Yashoda presented him with butter, Radha gave him the flute. Thus immersed in the love and overwhelmed by its feelings, Uddhav reached Mathura. He said to Krishna: "Lord, the real appearance of love, that I saw in Vrindavana is the only truth." Shri Krishna said: "Uddhav, You are weeping. Just look at me." Uddhav looked at him with wide, opened eyes. In every single hair of Lord, there existed Gopis. Uddhav was indeed a Savant. But Lord had sent him to Braj only to be taught a lesson of love.

16.10.46 Battles with Jarasandh: Construction of Dvarka-puri

After the death of Kansa his widowed queens Asti and Prapti returned to their father Jarasandh's home and informed him that Krishna and Balarama had killed their husband Kansa. Infuriated by the news, Jarasandh at once launched a massive attack on Mathura. The people of Mathura were frightened by the strength of Jarasandh's army. Lord Krishna too fell in deep thought. Just then, divine weapons and chariots appeared from the heaven. Both the brothers took the weapons and boarded their chariots. Then they fought a fierce battle and slayed all the army of Jarasandh.

Balarama furiously caught Jarasandh and was about to kill him. But Lord Krishna stopped him. They then released Jarasandh and let him go unhurt. Jarasandh felt ashamed that Krishna released him because of his helpless condition.

Shukdev says: O Parikshit, despite his shameful defeat, Jarasandh attacked Mathura seventeen times with huge armies. But every time, the Lord defeated him and released him in kindness. And every time Jarasandh felt more humiliated."

At last, instead of attacking Mathura himself, Jarasandh sent Kalyavan to defeat Shri Krishna. Kalyavan launched an attack on Mathura with one crore strong Malechchh army. This time Lord Krishna decided to vacate Mathura instead of countering the attack.
He got Dwarikapuri constructed by Vishvakarma and settled all the people of Mathura there. Then, unarmed, Lord Krishna walked past Kalyavan. Pointed by Narad, Kalyavan at once recognised Krishna and gave Him a chase. He also challenged Him, but the Lord did not listen to his challenges and kept moving with face turned away. Kalyavan chased Him for long, but could not catch up.

Ultimately the Lord entered a cave. Kalyavan too followed Him into the cave. In the cave the Lord saw that someone was sleeping there. So He covered the man with his yellow length of cloth and himself hid inside the cave. Kalyavan too arrived there and saw the sleeping man. He mistook him for God and said: "Krishna, you might have thought that braves do not attack on sleeping people. So I will first wake you up and then kill you." Saying thus Kalyavan kicked the sleeping man hard. However, as soon as the man awakened and glanced at Kalyavan, Kalyavan got incinerated at once.

16.10.47 Tale of Muchkund

Parikshit asked: "Gurudev, who was that sleeping man?"

Shukdev says: "O king, that sleeping man was Muchkund, the son of the king Mandhata. The gods had sought his assistance in their war against the demon during the Satyayug. With Muchkund's help,the gods had defeated the demons and thus pleased had asked him to seek a boon. Muchkund then had sought a

boon of seeing God in tangible form. The gods had assured him that he would have a sight of God in Dwapar Yuga. Since Dwapar Yuga was still far away, so Muchkund had asked: "What should I do till then?" The gods asked him to sleep somewhere and blessed him with a boon that whoever waked him up would be incinerated at once, by his glance. Thus, in order to get Kalyavan incinerated and show Muchkund with his Divine form, Lord had gone to that spot where Muchkund was sleeping.

Muchkund got the sight of God in Chaturbhuj form; and seeked a boon of continuous devotion for three births. Thus, Lord defeated Malechchh army and captured all their wealth. He also defeated Jarasandha and caused great joy for the people of Dwaraka.

16.10.48 Marriage of Balarama

The king of Anart, Raiwat got his daughter Rewati married to Balarama with the blessing of Brahma.

16.10.49 Message of Rukmani for the Lord

Shukdev said: "O Parikshit, Bheeshmak was the king of Vidarbh. He had five sons and a daughter Rukmani. Rukmi, the eldest son of Bheeshmak, had fixed his sister's engagement with Shishupal, the prince of Chaidi. Narada did not like this development. He went to Kundanpur, the capital of Vidarbh and said in the court of Bheeshmak: O King, I am coming from Dwaraka." Bheeshmak said! "O great Sage, I have never heard about any city named Dwaraka". Thus, in the court of Bheeshmak, Narad narrated about the life of Lord Krishna and the grandeur of Dwaraka. Bheeshmak heard the tale with full attention. His daughter Rukmani too enjoyed the tale.

But Rukmi had a strong opposition against lord Krishna. Ignoring the wish of his father, he was not ready to get his sister married to Lord Krishna. On the appointed day, Shishupal appeared there, in a procession, to get married with Rukmani.

But Rukmani was determined to marry Lord Krishna. She sent a love letter to Krishna through a loyal Brahmin and declared a fast unto death. Lord Krishna read her letter, which said: "O Trilokkinath, since the moment, these ears have heard about your virtues, actions, character and plays, my soul experiences divine peace. O Achyut, my mind is dedicated in your feet. O great among the men, this Rukmani has dedicated herself in your feet. Now it is upto you to see that no jackal could take away the lion's share." The Brahmin, the carrier of the letter, returned to Kundanpur with an assurance from the Lord. Lord too called the charioteer and set out at once for Kundanpur. There in Kundanpur, Rukmani after getting the assurance from the Brahmin, was thus waiting for Lord's arrival.

Preparations for Rukmani's marriage with Shisupal were on with full swing in Kundanpur. All the houses, streets and lanes were cleaned and sprinkled with

scented water. All the men and women folk donned new clothes and ornaments. King Bheeshmak worshipped his ancestors and gods and welcomed the Brahmins liberally. Extremely beautiful princess Rukmani was given ceremonial bath and donned with auspicious clothes and bracelets.

The king of Chedi, Damaghosh got the auspicious rites for the marriage of his son Shishupal, performed by Brahmins. All the Baratis (people in marriage procession) were given grand reception. Many great kings like Shalv, Jarasandh, Dantvaktra, Vidurath and Paundruk were present in the marriage procession. They had come with their armies with an intention of fighting Krishna and Balarama. After Krishna's departure, Balarama too set out for Kundanpur with chaturangini (with four wings) army, for he had known about their opponents' preparedness.

Rukmani was eagerly awaiting Lord's arrival. She had received the news that Dwarakanath (Krishna) had resolved to take her away. She was feeling overwhelmed in her heart.

Seeing Lord Krishna arrived intently in the marriage ceremonies of his daughter, king Bheeshmak welcomed him. Seeing him, even the common people of Vidarbh prayed "May our princess Rukmani get Shri Krishna as her husband. At the same time, Rukmani emerged from her palace to go to the temple of Ambikadevi, soldiers were guarding her. In the temple, Rukmani prayed peacefully: "O Mother Ambika I greet you and Ganapati, who is sitting in your lap. I seek your blessing that may my wish be fulfilled and may I receive Shri Krishna as my husband."

On her way back, Rukmani was walking very slowly for she was awaiting Lord's arrival, which was due in any moment. Just then, Lord Krishna appeared before her. Before she could ride her chariot Lord lifted her from amidst the crowd. And in the presence of hundrerds of kings, Krishna and Balarama eloped away with Rukmani.

16.10.50 Defeat of Rukmi & Shishupal

Hearing the news that Krishna has eloped with Rukmani, Rukmi and all other kings present there boiled with anger. Accompanied by their huge armies, they decided to give them a chase. Thus chased my them, Yadnvanishis stopped and encountered the kings boldly. With a true ambition to win, brave Yadav soldiers defeated the enemeies. All the kings like Jarasandh fled for their lives. Rukmi had resolved that without getting Rukmani released from Krishna's captivity, he would not show his face in Kundanpur. He chased Lord Krishna for long. But Dwarakanath defeated him and got his head shaved.

16.10.51 Marriage of Rukmini & Krshna

Thus defeating all the kings, Lord Krishna brought Rukmani to Dwaraka. There they got married formally. All the people of Dwaraka celebrated festivities for

many days. People presented them with lot of precious gifts. All the people were in great joy to see Lakshmi as Rukmani with her husband Lord Krishna.

16.10.52 Birth of Pradyumna, Killing of Shambarasur

Shukdev says: O Parikshit, Kamadev was a part of lord himself. After getting incinerated by Rudra, Kamadev took refuge in the supreme lord to get an incarnation once more. Thus, Kamadev was born as Rukmani,s first son Pradyumn.
But just after his birth, Pradyumn was kidnapped by a demon Shambarasur. The demon dropped the baby into the sea, where a huge fish swallowed him in whole. Coincidently the fish was caught by the fishers and presented to the kitchen of Shambarasur. When the cooks cut the fish open, an extremely beautiful baby emerged. Mayawati, the governess of the kitchen, felt overjoyed to see the baby. She began to rear the baby with love and affection.

Once Narad arrived in the kitchen and said: "Mayawati, do you know who is in your lap? " "No, O Devarishi, I found him from the belly of a fish" said Mayawati. Devarishi Narad said: "He is your husband Kamadev and you are his wife Rati. In this birth, he has appeared as Pradyumn the son of Krishna. Hearing this, Mayawati saluted Narad with respect. Since then she regarded Pradyumn as her husband and served him accordingly. When Pradyumn matured. Mayawati reminded him about his real appearance. Pradyumn, thereafter, killed Shambarasur and got married with Mayawati. Then the couple arrived in Dwaraka.

16.10.53 Tale of Syamantak, the Gem

A person named Satrajit was a great devotee of Lord Suryanarayana. Pleased by his devotion, Suryadev presented him a gem called Syamantak. The gem had a radiance equal to the sun. Bearing that gem, Satrajit arrived in Lord's court. By the radiance of his gem, all the people and the courtiers mistook him for Suryadeva and stood in his regard. But the Lord recognised him and asked his coutiers to be calm. Then to Satrajit, Lord Said: "Satrajit, your gem is really very beautiful. Nana (maternal grandfather) Ugrasen is the king of this region. If you present this gem to him, it will be very good. But Satrajit refused to present that gem.

One day, later on, Satrajit's brother Prasenjit went hunting, wearing the gem in his neck. In the forest a lion killed him and snatched the gem. The lion was in turn killed by the Ursine king Jambvan. Jambvan took the gem to his cave and gave it to his children to play with. When Prasenjit did not return from hunting, Satrajit felt sorry and accused Krishna that He had killed his brother for the gem.

When lord Krishna heard that he was being blamed for the mishap, He himself went to the forests. There he found the dead body of Prasenjit, but there was no sign of gem around the cadaver. He found only footprints of a lion leaving from there. Following the footprints, He discovered the dead lion and the foot prints

of a great bear. Following the footprints, He reached in the cave where Jambvan's daughter Jambvati was playing with the gem.

As soon as lord Krishna proceeded to take the gem, Jambvan arrived. A fierce duel resulted between them. They continued to fight for twenty-six days without truce. On the twenty-seventh day Jambvan requested Lord! "Please wait O Lord." Lord said: "Do you want to take rest?" "No", said Jambvan, "I have recognised you. You are non other than Lord Narayana Himself. Nobody else has the power to defeat me." Lord appeared before Jambvan as Shri Rama. Jambvan prayed and worshipped Him. He was feeling guilty that he dared to fight Lord. Lord said that He had arrived there for the gem only. Jambvan gave him the gem and also his daughter Jambvati. Lord returned the gem to Satrajit and married Jambvati formally.

16.10.54 Marriage of Satyabhama & Krshna

Lord summoned Satrajit to his court and in the presence of the king Ugrasen, related the sequence of incidents that took place in the jungle. Satrajit felt ashamed. With a feeling of repentance he took the gem. He was getting afraid also that he made enemity with lord Krishna without reason. Hence to expiate his crime, Satrajit thought of presenting the gem Syamantak and his daughter Satyabhama to Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna accepted Satybhama as his wife but returned the gem to Satrajit saying: "It is a gift of lord Suryadev. Keep it with you. You are required to deposit the gold that you get from it, in the royal treasure."

16.10.55 Theft of Syamantak

Akrur and Kritvarma were not pleased with the marriage of Satyabhama. So they got Satrajit killed by Shatdanva. Shatdanva killed Satrajit in his sleep and absconded with the gem. Lord Krishna was then away in Hastinapur. Satyabhama too reached there and informed Krishna about her father's assassination. With Balarama, Lord Krishna chased Shatdhanva. But even after killing him, they could not trace the gem. Shatdhanva had given the gem to Akrur to keep till his return. But after the death of Shatdhanva, frightened Akrur came to stay in Kashi. From the effect of the gem Akrur performed many grand Yagyas there. Lord summoned Akrur from Kashi. After welcoming and treating him in the court, Lord asked him about the gem. Akrur showed the gem in the court. But Lord returned the gem to Akrur.

Other marriages of Lord Krshna:

16.10.56 Lord’s Marriage with Kalindi

Once Lord Krishna visited Indraprasth to see Pandavas there. There riding a chariot with Arjuna, He came to the forests. On the bank of river Yamuna a pretty woman was observing penance. By the instinct of God, Arjun drew near her and asked for her identity. She said: "I am Kalindi, the daughter of Suryadev.

I am penancing here in order to get married with Lord Krishna." Lord got Kalindi boarded on the chariot and got married to her formally.

16.10.57 Lord’s Marriage with Mitrvinda

Mitrvinda was the sister of Vind Anuvind the king of Ujjain. She had a desire to get Lord as her husband. But her brother, Vind Anuvind was a follower of Duryodhan. So he stopped his sister Mitrvinda from getting married to Krishna. But Krishna eloped with Mitrvinda from the his court and got married to her formally later on.

16.10.58 With Satya

Satya was the daughter of Nagnjit, the king of Kaushal. She was extremely beautiful lady. The king had resolved that he would marry his daughter only to him who would defeat his seven most formidable oxen. Many princes has tried their luck since then but failed. When Lord Krishna heard about that, He reached Kaushal with his army. The king of Kaushal welcomed and treated him well, and told him about his resolution. Lord then took seven guises and in no time defeated his seven formidable oxen. Gladly the king married his daughter Satya to Lord Krishna.

16.10.59 With Bhadra

Shukdev said: "Parikshit, Lord's aunt (father's sister) Shrutkirti was married in the kingdom of Kaikauja. Bhadra was the daughter of Shrutkirti. Bhadra's brothers like Santardan etc. themselves had got their sister married to Lord Krishna.

16.10.60 With Lakshmana

Lakshmana was the daughter of the king of Madra. She was very beautiful and meritorius. Lord abducted her all alone from the Swayamvar organised for her marriage. Later, Lord married to her formally.

16.10.61 Salvation of Bhaumasur

Shukdev said: Parikshit, Prayjyotishpur was the capital of the demon Bhaumasur. He was very strong and powerful. He had snatched the canopy of Varuna, ear-rings of Aditi the mother of the gods, and Maniparvat of the gods on Meru. Apart from these, he had also captured sixteen thousand and one hundred princesses as well.

Devraj Indra himself visited Dwaraka and Prayed Lord to get them rid of Bhaumasur's atrocities. With the dear wife Satyabhama and riding his vehicle Garuda. Lord Krishna arrived in the capital of Bhaumasur. But to enter Pragjyotishpur was a impossible task. But with the blows of his mace and arrows, Lord easily broke the hills, destroyed strategic positions and cut the snares with sword. By his wheel he destroyed the walls of fire, water and air. With the loud sound of conch, lord renderered the machines, installed there, useless.
Ultimately, God destroyed the rampart of the citadel. Disturbed by the noise, the

five-headed demon Mur ran with a trident to kill God. But with a single shot of his arrow, Lord broke his trident and cut his head with his wheel. Soldiers and commanders of Bhaumasur were also killed. Bhaumasur then came himself to fight. He had donned a shinning crown and was wearing big earrings. With his wheel, Lord cut the demon's head. As soon as He beheaded the demon, the gods showered flowers on the Lord and worshipped Him. Even the mother earth came and put a garland of five colours around lords neck. She also presented to him the earrings of Aditi, canopy of Varuna, and a great gem. At the request of earth, Lord assured Bhaumasur's son Bhagdatt freedom from his fears.

16.10.62 Lord’s Marriage with Captive Princesses

After slaying Bhaumasur, Lord entered his palace. There he released the sixteen-thousand one-hundred captive princesses. The princesses were very much impressed by the Lord. They had all accepted in their mind, Lord Krishna as their husband. Lord too bowed before their love and accepted them as his wives and arranged to send them to Dwaraka.

16.10.63 Pradyumna’s Marriage with Rukmvati

Shukdev says: Parikshit, Rukmvati was the daughter of Rukmi, the brother of Rukmani. When a Swayamvar was organised for her, she saw Pradyumn. She was so impressed by him that she chose him as her husband. But it was not acceptable to other princes. They tried to stop their marriage. But defeating them all, Pradyumn abducted Rukmvati and married her formally. Then to please his sister Rukmani, Rukmi got his grand-daughter Rochana married to Rukmani's grandsons Anirudh.

16.10.64 Marriage of Usha-Anirudha

The son of the demon king Bali, Banasur was a great devotee of Lord Lord Shiva. Banasur ruled over the kingdom Shonitpur. By the grace of Lord Lord Shiva, he had received thousand arms. Even all the gods including Indra used to serve him. Thus blinded by his physical strength, Banasur sought a boon from Lord to meet a match for his strength. Lord Shiva said: "O fool, your thirst for war shall be quenched when your flag is broken."

Banasur had a daughter named Usha. Once she had a dream in which Anirudh was making love with her. She was very much perplexed by the dream. After a few days with the help of her friend Chitralekha, Anirudh sneaked into her palace. He stay there and enjoyed the company of Usha for long. But Anirudh's clandestine stay could not remain hidden from the eyes of Banasura. So he put Anirudh in prison. There in Dwaraka, everyone was worried by Anirudh's long absence.

It was Narad, who ultimately revealed the fact that Anirudh was in the prison of Banasur. Hearing the news, Lord Krishna launched an attack on Banasur. His armies surrounded Shonitpur. During Ghurabandi the flag of Banasur's palace fell. Lord Shanker arrived to assist Banasur. Lord Krishna cut all the arms of Banasur. At the request of Lord Shiva, he left only four of his arms intact.

Banasur bowed his head before Lord Krishna and brought Anirudh and Usha respectfully before Him. With them Lord Krishna returned to Dwaraka where formal marriage of Usha and Anirudh took place.

16.10.65 Tale of King Nrig

Once, Lord Krishna's sons visited the forests. There they saw a huge Chameleon fallen in a large, deep well. They tried to pull it out but in vain. The princes, therefore, returned to the palace and related this strange episode to Lord Krishna. Lord too came to the well and with His left hand, easily pulled the Chamelon out.

As soon as the chameleon came out, it turned into a divine god and began to worship God. He said: "O Lord, I am Nrig. The king Ikshvaku was my father. In my life, I had donated uncountable numbers of cows to the Brahmins. But once a cow, donated by me, returned to my cowshed. By mistake I made a resolution to donate it to another Brahmin. My action led to a dispute between the two Brahmins, and my wisdom failed to settle their dispute. Both the Brahmins went away unsatisfied, but I met this fate after death. Since then, I had been in this well in the form of a chameleon. Now, by the graceful touch of your hands, O Lord, I have received salvation." King Nrig then went around the Lord and returned to his heavenly abode.

16.10.66 Salvation of Paundrak & Kashraj

Once Balarama and Krishna had gone to Braj to see Nandbaba there. Meanwhile the king Paundrak of Karush sent an envoy to lord Krishna with a message that said: 'I am Lord Vasudev.' Pandrak's envoy arrived in the court and read out the message: "To bestow my grace on the people, I have taken an incarnation. You have falsely named yourself as Vasudev and bore my insignia. Take my refuge or face the battle."

Shukdev said: Parikshit, hearing the message of Paundrak, Ugrasen and other courtiers began to laugh. Lord asked the envoy to inform Paundrak that He would launch His wheel on him and his army.

Receiving the message Paundrak launched an attack on Dwaraka with two Akshauhini army. The king of Kashi was a friend of Paundrak. He too came to his assistance with three Akshauhini armies. Paundrak had disguised as Vasudev and was bearing artifical conch, wheel, mace and lotus and. He had also adorned Swastik, Kaustubh etc. All the people began to laugh at Paundrak's clown like attire.

In no time, the Lord stripped him of all his adornments. His wheel cut his head. Then with an arrow the Lord cut the head of the king of Kashi. His head fell in front of his palace's gate. Sudakshin, the son of the Kashi king, organised a grand Yagya to avenge his father's killing. An ogress, Kritya emerged from the Yagya and began to burn Dwaraka. All the people prayed Krishna to protect them. Lord assured them to be fearless and ordered His wheel Sudarshan to kill

Kritya. Sudarshan extinguished the fire, killed Kritya and destroyed Kashi. Then it returned to the Lord's finger.

16.10.67 Salvation of Dvivid

The king Parikshit expressed his desire to hear about the life of Balarama. Shukdev said:, "O king, there was once a monkey named Dwivid. He was the friend of Bhaumasur. When Dwivid heard about Bhaumasur's killing by Shri Krishna, he began to cause large scale destruction in the kingdom. His disruptive activities in the country began to terrorize the subjects of Lord Krishna. Once hearing sweet music, the monkey was drawn towards the Raivtak mountain. There he saw Balarama amidst beautiful young women. The monkey began to behave indecently. Angered by his indecency, Balarama hit him with his pestel, named Sunand, and killed the monkey.

16.10.68 Marriage of Samb

Samb was the son of lord Krishna and born to Jambvati. He had Kidnapped Lakshmana, the daughter of Duryodhana from her Swayamvar. Infuriated Kauravas chased them and, with difficulty, they caught Samb and tied him. When the Yaduvanshis got the news, they began preparations to launch an attack on Kauravas. Balarama pacified them and reached Hastinapur alone. There he received a warm welcome from the Kauravas. Balarama said to them: "It is an order of the king Ugrasen that you should see Samb off with his newly wedded wife." Hearing Balarama's words Kauravas got angry and began to deride Yaduvanshis. Infuriated by Kauravas derisions, Balarama trained his pestle and plough. He intended to turn over the town of Hastinapur into the river Yamuna. When the city began to shake, Kauravas felt perplexed and begged Balarama for his pardon. Balarama assured them to be fearless and returned to Dwaraka with Samb and his newly wedded wife Lakshmana.

16.10.69 Sending of Emissary (Kings in captivity seek the Lord’s help)

Shukdev says: "Parikshit, once Lord Krishna was holding His court when an emissary arrived in the court. The kings who were held captive forcibly by Jarasandh had sent him. The emissary related the miseries of those kings to Lord Krishna. Through the emissary, the kings had requested: "O Lord of the world, Kindly get us free from our miseries. We are in your refuge. We desire your sight. Kindly bestow us with your grace." Lord Krishna sent the emissary off with assurance of timely action.

Meanwhile, Devarishi Narad arrived in the court and informed the Lord of Yudhisthir's intention to organise a grand Rajsuy Yagya and his cordial invitation for the Lord to attend the ceremony. Lord asked his friend Uddhav for an advice as to where He ought to go first - to Indraprastha in Rajsuy Yagya or to liberate the king from the captivity of Jarasandh. Uddhav advised Lord to go to Indraprastha first. There He would be able to serve both the purposes.

16.10.70 Lord’s Departure for Indraprastha

Uddhav's advise was in the interest of all. Everyone supported it. Taking permission from His priest and teachers, Lord set out on a chariot with the whole family to reach Indraprastha. In Indraprastha, Pandavas accorded the Lord with warm-hearted felicitations. By the dictate of Lord, Mayasur built a divine looking court for Yudhishthir. The courtroom was a marvellous piece of architecture. The shinning, smooth, floor of it appeared like water, while water bodies presented a look like marble floors.

16.10.71 Killing of Jarasandh

During Yudhishthir's Rajsuy Yagya, all the Pandavas set out in all the directions to conquer the kings and expand the boundaries of their kingdom. Warriors like Bheem, Arjun defeated great kings all around and extended the boundaries of Yudhisthir's empire. But to defeat Jarasandh, - Bheema, Arjuna and Lord Krishna went in the guise Brahmins. They reached Jarasandh capital Girivraj and prayed him for donations. Jarasandh promised to give them the things of their desires. Lord Krishna then introduced themselves and begged Jarasandh for a duel with any of them. Jarasandh accepted to fight a duel with Bheema. He gave Bheema a mace and both of them came out to the outskirts of the town, where they began their duel. Both of them were equally strong and equally brave and well pitted.

Twenty-seven days passed, but their duel remained inconclusive. On the twenty-eighth day, during the fight, Lord signaled Bheema a way to kill Jarasandh. He took a small twig in his hands and tore it apart into two. Bheema understood the signal and beating Jarasandh on ground, he tore him apart in two pieces and threw them in opposite directions. Thus came the end of evil Jarasandh. Lord Krishna and Arjuna heartily greeted Bheema for his success. They then enthroned Jarasandh's son Sahdev and also got the captive kings released.

16.10.72 Salvation of Shishupal

King Yudhishthir had invited great vedic Brahmins and Acharayas on the occasion. Those great Sages included Ved Vyas, Bhardwaj, Sumantu, Gautam, Asit, Vashishth, Chyvan, Kanv, Maitrey, Kavash, Chit, Vishvamitra, Vamdev, Sumati, Jemini, Kratu, Pail, Parashurama, Shukracharya, Asuri, Vitihotra, Madhuchchanda, Veersen and Akritvarn etc. Persons from Kauravas side like Drona, Bheeshma, Kripacharya, Dhritrashtra, Vidhur and Duryodhan etc. were too invited to witness the celebrations. Even Brahma, Shiv, Indra, Gandharvas, Vidyadhars had too arrived. But before the Yagya could start a dispute cropped up among the great sages as to who ought to be worshipped first in the Yagya.

In the opinion of Sahdeva (youngest of the Pandava brothers, not the son of Jarasandh), Lord Krishna deserved the first worship. Every one supported him. Only Shishupal could not tolerate the decision. He stood up and said: "In the presence of such great ascetics, savants, polymaths and sages, how can this cowherd deserve the first worship." Despite Shishupal bitter remarks Lord

Krishna kept quiet. But Shishupal did not. Encouraged by Lord's silence he began to attack the kings, who stood by Lord's side, with sword. He was simultaneously abusing Lord Krishna also. Lord had assured Shishupal of this forgiveness for up to one hundred sins. But now Shishupal's sins have crossed that permitted number. So, quieting all, Lord cut his head with His wheel. As soon as the dead body of Shishupal fell on the ground, a flame emerged from it and merged with Lord Krishna. Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, feelings of hostility had been accumulating in the heart of Shishupal for his past three births against Lord Krishna. It was because of these intense hostile feelings that Shishupal met salvation eventually.

After the salvation of Shishupal, ceremonies and rituals of Yagya proceeded unabated. At the end king Yudhishthir presented all those present there with fitting gifts and took ceremonial bath. At the request of Pandavas, lord Krishna stayed in Indraprastha for many months.

16.10.73 Salvation of Shalva

Shukdev says: "Parikshit, now listen to the tale of how Lord caused salvation for Shalv. Shalv was the childhood friend of Shishupal and had attended the marriage of Rukmani as a member of Shishupal's wedding party. At that time, Yaduvanshis had defeated them all including Jarasandh and Shalv. Right at that moment, Shalv had resolved to destroy Yaduvanshis and began worshipping Gods of the gods Pashupati (Shiv). Lord Ashutosh Lord Shiva was pleased with him. As a boon, Shalv had got an aeroplane that was invincible even for the gods, demons, humans, nagas, etc and was particularly formidable for Yaduvanshis. By the dictate of Lord Lord Shiva, the demon Maya constructed such an aeroplane of iron. The aeroplane named Saubh was as big as a city and was difficult to be spotted or caught. It could move as fast as one's wishes. Soon after getting the aeroplane, Shalv launched an attack of Dwaraka.

Surrounding Dwaraka, Shalv began to destroy buildings and houses there. Seeing the people terrorized, Pradyumn consoled them to be fearless and himself set out on a chariot to counter Shalv. He pierced Shalv with arrows. But Shalv's minister Dyumana attacked Pradyumn with a mace. By the blow of the mace, Pradyumn lost his consciousness. But soon he came around and began to slay Shalv's forces. The fierce battle continued for twenty-seven days. Lord was away then in Indraprastha Yagya. But He was sure that in his absence Kshatriya kings of Shishupal side would be attacking on Dwaraka.

Lord reached Dwaraka and saw a fierce battle between Pradyumn and Shalv. Seeing Lord arrive, Shalv began to attack Him with sharp arrows. Lord hit Shalv with a powerful blow of mace and he began to spit blood from his mouth. He then tried to show many illusions and showered Lord with weapons. But Lord wounded Shalv with his arrows, broke his aeroplane with his mace. Very soon thereafter the aeroplane plunged in to the sea. Shalv then attacked Lord with mace but Lord cut his head with Sudarshan wheel. Seeing his end, all the gods showered flowers on Lord.

16.10.74 Salvation of Dantvaktra & Vidurath

After the killing of Shishupal, Shalv etc. Dantvaktra arrived in the battlefield carrying a mace. When Lord saw him coming, He too jumped down from the chariot and baulked his movement with a mace. Dantvaktra tried to humiliate God with his abuses and hit him on head with his mace. Lord easily bore the blow of mace and hit Dantvaktra's chest with his mace named Kaumodaki. Dantvaktra's heart tore apart by the blow and he fell dead.

Vidurath was the brother of Dantvaktra. He came in the field with sword and shield to avenge his brother's death. Seeing him ready to launch an attack, Lord cut Vidurath's head with his wheel. Thus, Lord Krishna entered Dwaraka only after killing Shalv, Dantvaktra and Vidurath. All the gods and other inhabitants of heaven showered flowers on Him.

16.10.75 Sudama – The Lord’s Friend

During his stay as a disciple at the hermitage of sage Sandipani, Lord Krishna had a Brahmin friend named Sudama. He was very indifferent in nature with no desires for the material things. After their education, Lord Krishna came to Dwaraka while Sudama, who had no any inclination for accumulating material wealth, got married and began to pass his life with his wife Susheela abject poverty.

One day his wife Susheela said: "O lord, your friend Krishna is the king of Dwaraka. He is very benevolent to Brahmins and his devotees. If you go to see him, he will understand your miseries and grant you a lot of wealth." But Sudama plainly refused saying: "Devi, I have chosen the path of devotion for self upliftment and not for the wealth." Susheela, however, kept of insisting: "All right, don't go for the wealth. But at least you can go to see your old friend. Sudama accepted this proposition, thinking that only the sight of Lord yields supreme benefit to the devotee. But he wanted something as a gift to present to his old friend. At this, his wife tied four handfuls of raw rice in a bundle.

With that humble gift, Sudama set out for Dwaraka. His poverty was at its helm. But he kept on reciting Lord's name all along the way. After walking for some distance, Sudama felt thirsty. He drank water, quenched his thirst and thanked God that He at least does give water to drink. Sudama kept on walking the whole day. In the evening, he kept the bundle of rice under his head as a pillow and slept.

Now it was God's turn to show His gratitude for the devotee. When Sudama awoke in the morning, he found himself right in front of Lord Krishna's palace. At first he could not believe his eyes; but the people told him that he was in Dwaraka and standing right before the lord's palace. Sudama requested the gatekeeper to inform Lord Krishna that his childhood friend Sudama had come. Lord Krishna was sitting in the company of Rukmani when the gatekeeper delivered the message. As soon as Lord Krishna learned about Sudama's

arrival, He stood up and ran helter-skelter to welcome his childhood friend. At the gate He cordially embraced Sudama and escorted him into his private chamber and made him sit on the throne.

Krishna and queen Rukmani both washed Sudama's feet one by one. By the mere touch of his friend, Krishna was feeling overjoyed. His eyes filled with tears. He and Sudama were holding each other's hands. Their hearts were beating with the memories of their period as disciples at the hermitage of Sandipani. For long, none of them could uttered a word. At last Sudama said: "O Jagadguru Krishna, I have the fortune of being your friend. What remains for me to do?"

Lord Krishna said: "Brother, have you brought for me something sent by my sister-in-law? I love to accept even the pettiest thing presented with affection."

Shukdev says: 'O Parikshit, at the Lord's words, Sudama felt ashamed and he did not reveal the four handfuls of raw rice that he had brought as gift. With shame, Sudama began to look at the ground. Lord knew everything that his dear friend Sudama had never remembered him with a desire for wealth. This time too he has come at the insistence of his wife.

'Hence, I will give him the wealth that is rare even for the gods...' thought Lord Krishna and snatched the bundle of raw rice and opened it with great respect. He put one handful of it in his mouth. When Lord proceeded to take next handful, queen Rukmani held his hand and prayed: "O Vishvambhar (fosterer of the world) for the prosperity of entire world this one handful is sufficient."

Sudama stayed that night in the palace of Shri Krishna. There he experienced the comfort of Vaikunth (abode of God). Staying there for many days, Sudama at last, took leave of Shri Krishna and set out for his home. Lord did not give Sudama anything apparently nor did Sudama asked for His favour. He was travelling overwhelmed by a divine sense of devotion and felt that Krishna might have not given him wealth lest he should forget Him.

Thus, sunk in myriad kinds of thoughts, Sudama reached his home. But at the place, where his dilapidated hut stood once there was now a divine palace surrounded by verdant gardens. The floors of the palace were embedded with precious gems and stones. Standing at the gate, Sudama felt confused, when his wife Susheela came out with scented water to welcome him. Tears were rolling on her cheeks. With love she greeted Sudama and escorted him inside the palace. Sudama was still reflecting over the God's grace and praying: "May I have the friendship of lord in every birth, may my affection increase for Lord's feet. I don't want wealth.' Since then, Sudama enjoyed the comforts of the palace as the bounty of Lord bestowed upon him by non other than the Lord Krishna himself. His devotion increased day by day.

16.10.76 Meeting of Lord with Gopas-Gopis

Shukdev says: "O Parikshit, Lord Krishna was passing his time with pleasure in Dwaraka. A total solar eclipse happened to fall during that period. People from all over India thronged in Kurukshetra to take a dip in sacred Ganges on that great occasion. All the Yaduvanshis too arrived there. When Vrajvasis (Inhabitants of Vraj) learned about Krishna and Balarama's arrival in Kurukshetra, they too assembled there.

During the festival, Lord Krishna met His foster-father Nand and other cowherds who were his childhood friends. Lord Krishna met the Gopis also who had been pining for his sight since long. They enjoyed the meeting and kept on chatting for long. Overwhelmed by love and joy, Vasudev embraced Nand. Lord Krishna and Balarama respectfully greeted mother Yashoda and father Nand. They too embraced Krishna-Balarama cordially.

Gopis were specially overwhelmed by Lord's sight. They had no other desire but to have a sight of Lord. That day their long cherished dream had come true. Gopis imbued the captivating appearance of Lord and experienced the joy of embracing Him. Lord met all the Gopis and embraced them. Inquired about their well being and preached them with spiritual knowledge. By the virtue of that knowledge, feeling of living disappeared among the Gopis and they merged with God forever.

16.10.77 Organization of Yagya by Vasudeva

Devarishi Narad, Vyasa and many other great sages arrived in Kurukshetra to have a sight of Lord. Lord welcomed them all. Then Vasudev greeted them and enquired about way for his self up liftment. Laughingly, Narad said: "Vasudev, a person, already living at the bank of the Ganges, discards her holy water and goes to other places of pilgrimage for his purification.

In the presence of Krishna-Balarama, the sages said: "You regard the indescrible, eternal, Sachchidanand Shri Krishna as your son, and seek the way of your self upliftment from us. O Vasudev, recognise Him. Take to His refuge, only He can salve you." Vasudev got the meaning of sage's words and began to develop feelings of devotion for his son. Every human being has obligation for the gods, sages and his ancestors. The sages got a Yagya performed in Kurukshetra by Vasudev to free him from the obligation for gods.

16.10.78 Revisiting of Devaki's Six Sons

In Dwaraka, Krishna and Balarama used to greet their parent's first daily in the morning. Now Vasudev had recognised His identity. So after their return from Kurukshetra, when Krishna-Balarama went as usual to greet their parents, Vasudev greeted them first. Lord Krishna then preached his father about the metaphysical knowledge. With that knowledge, Vasudev began to see Krishna everywhere.

Mother Devaki was also present there. Memory of her six children, who were killed by Kansa, was still afresh in her mind. She had heard that Krishna had fetched the dead son of Sandipani from Yamloka. So she prayed to them " You both are venerable even to the gods. Kindly grant me my desire. Show me my six sons who were killed by Kansa. By their mother's dictate and helped by Yogmaya, both the brothers reached Sutal Loka.

The demon king Bali welcomed them there and offered them a seat, and washed their feet. King Bali then asked God what could he do for Him. Lord said: O demon king, in Swayambhuv Manvantara, six sons were born to Urna the wife of Prajapati Marichi. They were all gods. They had once seen Brahma trying to copulate with his own daughter and hence derided at him. Indignant Brahma had then curse them to take birth in demon incarnation. They therefore were born as the sons of Hiranykashipu.

In the present era, Yogmaya had made them born as Devaki's sons who were killed by Kansa. They are all now in your Loka. Mother Devaki is mourning for them, so we shall take them with us. They will thus be freed from the curse and go to their heavenly abode." Thus Lord Krishna and Balarama brought those six babies to Dwaraka and handed them to mother Devaki. Seeing her babies again, Devaki's heart filled with love for her sons. Milk began to flood her breast. She breast-fed them. Drinking the milk, all the babies received salvation. They then departed to their heavenly abode.

16.10.79 Love & Marriage of Subhadra-Arjun

King Parikshit asked: "Gurudev, how did my grandfather Arjun and grandmother Subhadra got married? I want to hear this tale. Kindly narrate it to me."

Shukdev said: Parikshit once travelling on a pilgrimage tour, Arjun reached in Prabhas region. There he learned that Balarama was desirous of marrying his sister Subhadra to Duryodhan. But Vasudev and Krishna were not in the favour of this marriage. So, a strong urge took hold in his mind to get Subhadra as his wife. Acting as per the urge, Arjun reached Dwaraka in the guise of Vaishnava sage. It was rainy season then, so with an excuse of Chaturmasya Vrat (four months long fast), Arjun stayed in Dwaraka. During his stay, Balarama served and looked after him very well. But neither Balarama nor any other inmates of the palace could recognise Arjun.

Once Balarama invited Arjun to his home. There he offered good, delicious food to Arjun. Subhadra too served him well. There, they fell in love with each other. Later on, boarding a chariot, Subhadra went out of the palace for a joy ride. At the outskirts of the town, Arjun was awaiting for her. He had already taken permission of Devaki-Vasudev and Krishna. Subhadra too had silently nodded her acceptance.

So that evening Arjun and Subhadra eloped from Dwaraka. The news of

Subhadra eolping with Arjun first outraged Balarama. But Lord Krishna and other near and dear ones convinced and pacified him.

16.10.80 Prayers of Vedas

King Parikshit asked: "Brahmin, Brahma is beyond the limit of do's and why's. He is free from the virtues like Sat, Raja and Tama. He cannot be seen by mind. On the other hand Guna (Virtues) is the subject of all the Shrutis (Vedas). How do Vedas then depict Brahma?"

Shukdev says: "Parikshit, Lord is omnipotent and a treasure of all the virtues. Shrutis (Vedas) do depict Saguna (with virtues) clearly. But reflect on them deeply and you get virtuesless meaning from them. Once, Lord Badrinarayana had arrived among the inhabitant sages of Kalaygram. Devarishi Narad had asked him the same question. In the assembly of the great sages, Lord then narrated the same tale, which the inhabitants of Janloka had asked.

The supreme sages like Sanakadi and his brothers were equal in knowledge, penance etc. Yet they chose Sanandan as the narrator, and rest three became the audience. Sanandan had said: "Such as the savants and balladiers sing in praise their king to wake him up in the morning, similarly annihilating the entire universe in Him, Paramatma (supreme soul) lies asleep with all His powers. At the end of Pralaya, Vedas (Shurtis) wake Him up through the words that demonstrate Him."

Shrutis (Vedas) says: "O Ajit (invincible one), you are supreme, no one can conquer you; may you win everywhere. O Lord, you are complete with all the luxuries, hence destroy the illusion that allures all the living beings. We are unable to describe your appearance. But when your powers manifest in creation. We get some ability to describe you.

Description of Brahma, Indra, Agni, Surya and other gods, by us (Vedas) appears as separate, The complete universe is not different from you. It is a description of your various forms. You are unborn, even in those idols. You do not take birth.

All the Vedas describe your merits. All the savants love none but you through hearing and remembering of your auspicious, benevolent virtues.

O, endless, if anybody in human incarnations does not recite or remember your name he is breathing in vain.

Dharma(duty), Arth (Wealth), Kama (Sensual pleasure) and Moksha (Salvation) have no meaning for those who remember you with pure heart.

O endless, glorious Lord, common people are wandering in abject darkness of unnecessary disputes. Your realization is impossible. When will that moment arrive in my life. When I shall recite your names like Madhav, Vamana, Trilochan, Govind etc. with joy and get free from all the miseries.

O Lord, this entire universe is false. But still appears as real. We pray to that God who is present as an illuminating truth in this false creation.

O Lord of all, people can not sail across this ocean of death without you, no matter what they do to achieve salvation. Their all efforts are futile.

O Lord, all the living beings are wandering in your illusion. But the learned ones don't regard themselves separate from the cycle of life and death. In your shelter, they have nothing to fear.

Shukdev says: "Parikshit as per your query, I told you how Vedas describe Parabrahma Paramatma who is free from natural virtues and invisible. O king, it is the lord who conceptualizes the universe and is present in the beginning, mid and the end of it. He is the Lord of nature and creatures. It is He who created the universe and entered it with the creatures. He created the bodies and controls them. Such as a human being, who is immersed in deep sleep, is not aware of his body. Similarly, on receiving God, the creature is freed from illusion. So one must continuously reflect on the virtues of Lord Shri Krishna."

16.10.81 Release of Lord Shiva from Crisis

Parikshit asked: "Gurudev, those among the gods, human beings and the demons, who worship Lord Lord Shiva, get wealth very soon. But those, who worship Lord Narayana, remain afflicated with scarcity. What is the reason for that?"

Shukdev said : "Parikshit, your grandfather Yudhishthir had put the same question before Lord Krishna."

In reply, Lord Krishna had said: "O Yudhishthir, I take away all the wealth from those whom I bestow my grace. When they are poor, their relatives desert them. I even render their efforts useless when they try to earn money. Thus being unsuccessful repeatedly, the people develop an attitude of indifference for wealth. Then they begin to take shelter as my devotee and mingle with me. Only then, I bestow my full grace on them and they receive me as Sachchidanand Parbrahma. Thus, pleasing me through my worship is extremely difficult. Hence, ordinary people give me up and worship other deities, which are in fact different forms of me.

Lord Shiva is Ashutosh and bestows his devotees quickly with grace. He gives wealth and other riches to his devotees. But once they get wealth, the devotees become despotic and even forget the God who had blessed them." In this context Shukdev narrated one ancient tale to Parikshit.

Once upon a time, there was a demon Vrikasur. He had pleased Lord Shiva and sought a boon that the person, upon whose head the demon put his hand, should be incinerated at once. Lord Shiva granted the boon without considering

the consequences. But as soon as the demon got this supernatural power, he ran to incinerate Lord Shiva first. The demon was eyeing Gauri Parvati, so he was determined to eliminate Lord Lord Shiva. Now afraid of his own boon, Lord Shiva ran for his life, with the demon following him in hot pursuit. At last Lord Shiva reached in Vaikunth and told Lord Vishnu about his crisis. Lord at once illusioned the demon and made him put his hand, on his own head. By the virtue of the boon, the demon was incinerated in no time and thus Lord Shiva could be saved.

16.10.82 Testing of Trinity

Once upon a time, all the sages assembled on the bank of Saraswati river. A dispute errupted among them as to who among the trinity was the greatest. By consensus they appointed sage Bhrigu to test the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Bhrigu reached to Brahma, but did not greet him. Brahma got infuriated but since the sage Bhrigu was his own son, He did not curse him. Then Bhrigu visted Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva proceeded to embrace the sage. But instead of accepting Lord Shiva's welcome, the sage began to abuse Him, saying: "You violate the dignity of Vedas, so I will not meet with you." Angry Lord Shiva raised his trident to kill him, but Bhagawati stopped Him. At last Bhrigu reached Vaikunth to see Lord Vishnu.

Lord was lying with head in the lap of Lakshmi. Bhrigu kicked hard at His chest. But instead of getting angry, Lord got up, bowed his head before the sage and begged pardon: "O Sage, pardon me, I could not welcome you at once, at your arrival. Your feet are soft, I hope they are not hurt. All my sins have been washed by the touch of your feet." Bhrigu felt very pleased by the serious talks of Lord. His heart felt overwhelmed with excess of devotion. He returned to the assembly of the sages and narrated his experience. Since then Lord Vishnu is regarded as the Supreme and giver of peace and fearlessness.

16.10.83 Revival of Brahmin’s dead children

There in Dwaraka lived a Brahmin. When the first son was born to his wife, it died immediately after birth. The Brahmin took his dead son to the royal court and complained: "My Son has died because of anti-Brahmin and licentious actions of the king." One by one, thus, eight sons were born to the Brahmin couple; but they all died immediately after birth. And the Brahmin kept on dumping his dead sons at the gate of the royal palace.

When his ninth son was born, and died, Arjun was also there in Dwaraka. He made a promise to the Brahmins: I shall guard your son or commit self immolation. At the time of next delivery, the agitated Brahmin came to Arjun. Training his bow and arrows, Arjun made all arrangements to protect Brahmin's tenth son. Sanctified by many mantras, Arjun's arrows constructed a fence around the labour room. A child took birth; but it too died after some time. Brahmin,then, cursed Arjuna. Arjun scouted through all the three worlds and even the netherworlds in search of the Brahmin's dead son, but he could not find him anywhere. Ultimately accepting his failure and as per his promise,

Arjun proceeded to immolate himself.

Meanwhile, Lord Krishna too learned about Arjun's vow and stopped him from self-immolation. Thereafter, riding a divine chariot, Lord set out with Arjun, towards west. Beyond the limits of cosmos. They reached the abode of Lord Vasudev in Tripadvibhuti. There Arjun saw that Lord was present in Purushottams appearance. Shri Krishna and Arjun greeted Him.

Lord Purushottam said in a serious voice: "O Krishna and Arjuna, only to have a sight of both of you, I brought the Brahmin's sons to me. Both of you had taken incarnation on earth from my part to protect the religion. All the demons have been slain by now. Now you too return to me.

Shri Krishna and Arjun again greeted Lord and returned on earth with all the sons of the Brahmin.
Arjun was greatly surprised to see the supreme abode of Lord. He felt that whatever strength a living being had, it was all by Shri Krishna's grace. Like common, ordinary people, the Lord stayed on earth enjoing mundane comforts, performed Yagyas like kings, behaved like idealistic people; deterred His subjects and slayed evil kings to re-establish religion on earth.

16.11 Chapter 11

This chapter contains 4 sub-sections.

16.11.1 Curse of Sages to Yaduvanshis

Shukdev said: "O Parikshit, as the time passed, Yaduvanshis grew stronger and more influencial. Now no longer did they like the welcoming and treating of the great sages like Kanu, Dhrvasa, Maitreya, Dhannmy etc. by the Lord. Lord Krishna knew about their disliking, but secretly He was pleased by this change in Yaduvanshi's behaviour, for He knew that by disregarding the saints and the scriptures, they would meet their end sooner.

Once the Yaduvanshis clothed Jambvati's son Samb in a woman's attire and, showing him to the sages asked mockingly: "Maharaj, this is our sister-in-law. She is an expecting mother. She feels shy to ask but tell us what will be born to her?

Through their unfailing vision, the Sages knew the reality and said: "Fools, a pestle shall be born to her and that pestle shall exterminate the entire Yaduvansh. Now all the Yaduvanshis were perplexed by sages' prediction, and approached their king Ugrasen. But, even the king was helpless now because he could not change the words the pious sages.

In due course , a pestle was born to Samb. Frightened of an imminent fate, Yaduvanshis crushed the pestle into a fine powder and threw it into the sea. Only a nail remained, that also was thrown into the sea where a fish swallowed it. A fisher caught the fish and cut it open and found the nail. He gave it to a

hunter. The hunter fixed the nail in the head of his arrow. On the other hand, the sea waves washed the powder of the pestle ashore where it germinated and grew as luxuriant grasses. Later on, once all the Yaduvanshis assembled at the sea-shore for a picnic where they drank wine and began to fight with one another under intoxication. Soon their quarrel grew so high that they pulled out the grasses, which were growing there, to use as the arms. With the grasses the Yaduvanshis beat one another to death.

16.11.2 Preaching of Narad about Bhagvad

Once Narad arrived in Dwaraka. Vasudev prayed him and requested to provide him with pious company of Bhagwad dharma. Narad said: "O king, once upon a time, nine great sages arrived in the court of the king Janak. King Janak had put the same curiosity before them also. I will narrate the conversation that followed there between the sages and the king."

First of all, the first Yogishwar Kavi said: "O king Janak, dedication is the first duty (dharma) of a Vaishnav. He should devote everything - his actions, fruits of actions and even himself, at the feet of Lord. He ought to hear about Lord's virtues. Such a devotee shall be indifferent to the worldly affairs and shall laugh, dance or sing occasionally and sanctified all the three worlds."

The king then asked about the characteristics of the Lord's devotees. Another Yogeshwar Hari said: "A true devotee of the Lord remains unaffected by feelings like hunger, thirst, life, death, labour, pain, fear and desire. Such a devotee is the excellent kind of Bhagwad. Even the wealth of all the three worlds cannot shake the faith of such a devotee, because Lord Shri Hari himself stays in his heart."

"What is illusion?" A Yogeshwar Antariksh replied: "King, an illusion is also God's play. Having a possessive feeling about mundane is illusion. Thinking in terms of 'I', 'Me', 'Mine', 'My', 'You', 'Your' is also illusion. If one can have such an affection for God as he has for worldly things, one can easily surmount the illusion."

King Janak then asked about the method of worshipping Lord. A yogeshwar, Karbhajan said: " O king, the Lord had a fair complexion in Satyuga. People used to receive Him through methods like meditation, reconciliation, etc. In Tretayuga, the Lord had reddish complexion and Yagyas were the main means to achieve Him. In Dwaparyuga, the Lord had yellowish complexion and He could be pleased through worships. In the present Kaliyuga, Lord has dark complexion and one can receive Him through means like recitation, narration and hearing of His name and plays.

Thus, narad preached Vasudev about Bhagwad dharma. Now the heart and mind of Vasudev were thoroughly clean and pure.

16.11.3 Lord's Departure to his Abode

To remind the Lord about the moment of His departure, Brahma arrived in Dwaraka accompanied by all the gods. He prayed to Him: "O Lord, you have completed your duty of what we had once requested you. Now, You please return to your abode. Lord said: "On the seventh day from now, Dwaraka shall submerge in the sea and Yadavas shall fight among themselves to death. I too shall depart then. The arrow of a hunter shall be the cause of my departure."

When Uddhav learned that Lord was about to wind up His plays, he approached Him and said: "I understand, O Lord, that this all is happening by your wish. But I cannot part for a moment from your feet. Hence, take me also with you to your abode." Lord said: "Uddhav, I will not go anywhere. My entire brilliance will be present in Shrimad Bhagwad. You stay here preaching Bhagwad dharma." Saying thus, lord preached Uddhav about the Geeta Gyana through the tale of Avadhoot.

Lord narrated thus: "Uddhav, Once, our ancestor Yadu happened to see Lord Dattatreya in a forest. Lord was indulged in the supreme joy in the guise of Avadhoot. Yadu asked him about the reasons for his whimsical state." Avadhoot had said: "O king, making the various animals, birds, insects etc as my teacher, I have learned about spirituality from them. That is why I am free from mourning and attachment. Earth, air, sky, water, fire, the moon the sun, pigeon, python, sea, grasshopper, bumblebee, honey bee, elephant, extractor of honey, deer, fish, prostitute, osprey, boy, girls, arrow-maker, snake, spider and wasp are all my teachers. I took refuge at these twenty-four teachers and learned from their behaviour.

I learned forgiveness from earth, purity from the sky, holiness and cleanliness from the water, innocence and renunciation from the fire; indifferentness from the air, to remain unaffected by circumstances from moon, abdication from the Sun, incoherence from the pigeon, dependence upon fate and remain effortless from the python, to remain always happy and serious from the sea, to be under the control of sense organs and hence meet total destruction from the grasshopper, acquiring of virtues from bumblebee, fault in cumulating from honey bee, to abstain sensuous talks from the Deer, to eliminate greed from the fish, sorrow in hope and happiness in desperation from the prostitute, to feel happy in uncertainty from osprey, dispute among many from the girls, concentration from the arrow-maker, to roam alone and detachment from a particular place from the snake, virtues of the creator Lord from the spider, and I learned similarity from the wasp."

In the guise of Avadhoot, Lord Dattatreya says: "O king, I learned wisdom and apathy from my body also, because life, death, life and death again are inseparably intertwined with it. Hence the net result of loving this body is nothing but sorrow. Thus our own body also helps us to learn about metaphysical knowledge.

Lord Krishna also explained Uddhav regarding futility of physical and heavenly luxuries. This human body is like a tree, on which two birds - Jeevatma and Paramatma (microcosm and supreme soul) - have taken shelter. Two fruits - happiness and sorrow - appear on it. These fruits are eaten by Jeevatma (micrososm) while Paramatma (supreme soul) stays as an indifferent onlooker. There are three kinds of Jeev - Baddh (Bound), Bhakt (devotee) and Mukt(liberated). Baddh Jeevas (bound souls) are those who indulge in sensual pleasures and those who dislike pious company. Mukt Jeev (liberated souls) are those who are free from attachment and bindings. Bhakt (devotees) are those who meditate on me and dedicate their everything in my feet and have love for my virtues. My devotee is kind, free from flaws, tolerant, has feeling of fraternity for all and controls his desires.

16.11.4 Bhikshu-Geet

Lord said: "Uddhav, in the world, there is indeed a dearth of such tolerant people who can tolerate bitter remarks of evil ones. In this context there is a tale of a greedy Brahmin who lived in Ujjain. That Brahmin had been badly tormented by the evil people after he had lost his wealth. But still the Brahmin did not lose his patience and regarding his present state as a result of his previous birth's deeds, he expressed his feelings thus:

These people are not the cause of my miseries; neither the gods, nor body, not even planets and time, can be blamed for my miseries. Scriptures and learned ones held the mind itself guilty of one's miseries. It is the mind that runs the cycle of the world and makes every kind of efforts.

In the absence of mind, even the soul is rendered motionless. When one accepts the dictates of the mind and indulges in sensual pleasures, soul too comes to be bound with them. The ultimate outcome of all the spiritual efforts like celibacy, study of Vedas etc. and abidance to pious actions is the concentration of mind. Concentration of mind and is abstaintation from sensual pleasures are the primary conditions for attainment of Paramyoga (supreme meditation). Thus Lord preached Uddhav about Gyana Geeta. Uddhav too took Bhagwad (which is a form of the Lord) with honour and departed for Badrikashrama.

16.12 Chapter 12

This chapter contains 6 sub-sections.

16.12.1 Description of Dynasties in Kaliyuga

Shukdev describes about the dynasties that would occur in Kaliyug. Ripunjay or Puranjay would be the last king of Brihdrath dynasty. This dynasty would be succeeded by the kings of Nand dynasty. Then a diplomatic Brahmin, named Chanakya, would exterminate this dynasty and enthrone Chandragupt Maurya. In Maurya dynasty, a great king would occur by the name of Ashokvardhan.

After him, Yavans would rule then for six hundred and forty years. Their rule would be succeeded by the governance of the fair-complexioned foreigners, who would rule for one hundred and sixty years. Thereafter, there would be no king and no subjects because people from all the classes would come forward to rule.

The ruler would be selected by the majority votes. There would be no any thing like holyness. Cows would grow thin like nannies. People would not marry, as per their castes. Greed, selfishness and sex would be the base of marriage life. In adverse conditions, spouses would desert each-other. There would be nothing like duty, responsibility and conduct. Hair would be the main item of adornment for the women.

People would not have the knowledge of religious scriptures in Kaliyug. Talkativeness would be identified with knowledge. Only those would be regarded as clever, who could pick others' pockets. Children would not regard or pay due respect to their parents. Children would maintain relations with parents till their marriage only, not after that. Boys would not touch the feet of their own parents, but would pay full respect to their father and mother-in-law, Brother-in-law would be dearer to them than their own brother.

Shukdev says: Parikshit, Kaliyug is the mine of faults, But it has only one great virtue - that the people will acquire divine position only by reciting Lord's name. Recitation of Lord's name, regardless of intention and motivation– whether it is love, derision, laziness or maliceness- would destroy one's sins.

But O Parikshit, the sinister people would do even the most difficult tasks in Kaliyug, but they would not recite Lord's name. They would not have an interest in the Lord. Their interests would be more in sensuous things like sound, touch, beauty, scent etc.

O Parikshit, the Paramgati (supreme salvation) that people could receive by ten thousand years of meditation in Satyuga; by performing Yagya for hundred years in Tretayuga and by worshiping Lord,s idol for ten years in Dwapar, that supreme salvation is easily available for people in Kaliyug simply by reciting Lord's name for one day and one night continuously. But still,in Kaliyug people would not have faith in Lord's name. It is their misfortune.

16.12.2 Last Preaching of Shukdevji

Shukdev says: O Parikshit, recitation of Shri Hari has occurred in Shrimad Bhagwad Mahapuran. O King, this soul is eternal, so you abandon this animal-like feeling that you would die. You are not the body. You are the eternal form of joy. Imbibe your mind with the reflections of Paramatma (supreme spirit) and have a sight of Him in the end. You are God yourself. Then neither Takshak nor death would do any harm to you. Unify yourself in the supreme being by thoughts like, 'I am Parabrahma.' Thus Shukdev assured Parikshit to be fearless.

16.12.3 Final Beatitude of Parikshit

Thus graced by Shukdev, king Parikshit faithfully worshiped Brahmrishi and prayed to him with folded hands: "Lord, you are an idol of kindness. You have bestowed your graced on me narrating the plays of Lord Shri Hari. Now I am salved and have achieved my natural state. You helped me receive the supreme position in my life alone. Now I can experience the soul as separate from my body." Accepting Parikshit's worships, Shukdev made his departure. Parikshit himself achieved the status of the sage and concentrated his soul in supreme spirit. Thus, before Takshak could bite him, he was merged in Brahma. Takshak stung his physical body only, which was burnt by the effect of the sting.

16.12.4 Nagayagya of Janameejaya

When Janmejay, the son of Parikshit, learned that a snake had stung his father, he organised, Sarpsatra. During the Satra, and invoked by the hymns of Brahmins, snakes drew from far and near and got burnt in the fire. Frightened Takshak approached Indra for refuge. Indra promised to help him. There, on earth, Janmejay asked the Brahmins: "Why has Takshak, the killer of my father, not arrived yet?" Through reconciliation, Brahmins saw that Takshak was clinging to Indra's throne. The Brahmin invoked Takshak along with Indra. Indra's throne began to move earthward. But then Brahaspati, the teacher of the gods, intervened and stopped the Yagya.

16.12.5 Branches of Vedas and Division

SUTJI described about the Samhitas and divisions of Vedas to the sages like Shaunak etc. Ved Vyas divided Vedas into four parts and created four Sanhitas viz, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva and taught Rigsanhita to Pail, Nigad sanhita to Vaishampayan, Chhandog Sanhita to Jemini and tought Atharvangiras Sanhita to Sumantu. All these four sages are the disciples of Ved Vyas.

16.12.6 Penance of Markandey & Sighting of Maya

SUTJI narrated the tale of Mrikandu's son Markandey. Taking shelter at Mahakaal (Lord Shiva), Markandey had turned away even Kaal (death). And by penance had a sight of Lord Shri Narayana. He prayed God to show His Maya (illusion). Thus Markandey saw the scene of Pralaya. All the creatures were drowning in the deluge. On a leaf of Banyan, then he saw Bal Mukund. Markandey entered Lord's heart and saw endless cosmos there. Then, by God's instinct, Markandey returned to his hermitage. Thus Markandey had the knowledge of Lord's metaphysical state.

In the last chapters, a brief content of Bhagwad and glory of Lord's devotion have been discussed. SUTJI says: O great sages, I have described what you have asked on the occasion of this pious assemblage. That voice is useless, which cannot recite Lord's name and can not praise His virtues. All the sins and omens are destroyed by constant recitation of Lord's name. One then receives devotion for Lord with pure heart and begins to experience and feel God's tangible form. Though all the other Purans contain description of Lord's appearance, but in

Shrimad Bhagwad Mahapuran, there is profuse description of Shri Hari in every chapter. Shrimad Bhagwad has a confluence of knowledge, asceticism and devotion. One receives devotion for Lord and salvation eventually merely by reciting, listening and reflecting over it.

NAMA SANKIRTANAM YASYA SARVPAP PRANASHANAM |
PRANAMO DUKHSHAMANAM TAM NAMAMI HARI PARAM ||

17 Linga Purana

This is the Fifth Purana. Preaching about the greatness of Lord Shiva and propagation of Ling-puja (worship of Shiva-Ling) are the main objectives of this Purana. This Purana has five parts:

1) Description of the creation. Origin of Ling and its worship. Yagya by Daksha. Immolation of Madan (Kamadev). Wedding of Lord Shiva. Tale of Varaha. Tale of Narasimha. Description of Surya and Soma vansh.
2) Greatness of Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma becomes the creator,Incarnations Of Shiva During Various Dwapar Yugas ,Dadhichi Subjugates The Sages and Shilad's Impossible Demand.
3) Manifestation Of Lord Nandishwar ,Kaliyuga ,The Seven Island ,The Meru Mountain,The Prominent Mountains ,Lord Brahma Assigns Lordships To The Deities and The Radiance Of Surya.
4) Dhruva - The Supreme Devotee ,The Origin Of Deities,The Lineage Of Aaditya,Yadu Dynasty, Appointment Of Andhak As The Lord Of Ganas,The Liberation Of Earth ,Killing Of Jalandhar and The Origin Of Lord Ganesh.
5) Story Of Upamanyu, Greatness Of Dwadakshar Mantra ,Greatness Of Shadakshar Mantra, The Majestic Lord Maheshwar,The Sun Manifestation Of Shiva's Power, Importance Of Guru ,Installation Of Shiva Linga ,Vajreshwari Vidya And Different Types Of Yoga is covered in Fifth Part.

As per the Purana, a fiery Shivaling appeared after the Pralaya. From this Shivaling, emerged all the Vedas and other scriptures, even Brahma, Vishnu and all other deities. Current prevalence of worship of Shivaling and idols seems to be an outcome of this Purana.

17.1Linga Purana Part 1

This section contains 14 sub-sections (to follow):

17.1.1 Sutji Narrates the Divine Tales of Linga Purana

Once, sage, Narad arrived at Naimisharanya where he found many sages engaged in austerities. All the sages were delighted to see him. They eulogized him in reverence and offered him seat. Sage Narad narrated some amazing tales describing about the greatness of Linga Puran. This made the sages even more curious about Linga Puran. Right then, Sutji also arrived there and the sages requested him to narrate the tales of Linga Puran.

After making salutations to lord Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh and Sage Krishna Dwaipayan, Sutji said— Sound is the medium through which the almighty Brahma manifests himself. Brahma manifests himself in the sacrosanct OMKAR mantra. Rigveda is his mouth, Samaveda his tongue, Yajurveda his neck and Atharvaveda is his heart. He is the Supreme Being and is beyond the reach of creation or deluge. He is one but manifests himself as three distinct deities—Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. These three deities are the expression of the three natural qualities respectively-Rajas, Satva and Tamas. He manifests

himself as Mahesh in his formless (Nirguna) identity. He manifests himself in all the living creatures as well as imperceptible things in the form of seven natural elements-Mahattatva (5 basic elements) Ahankara (ego), Shabda (Sound) Sparsh (touch), Roop (appearance), Rasa (taste) and Gandha (smell).

Lord Brahma compiled the divine tales of Linga Puran. It covers wide range of subjects like the beginning of creation, the origin of universe, description of the time, tales of different Kalpas, the greatness of Linga and its worship, tales related with Lord Shiva, characteristics of Shiva temple etc. It specially elaborates upon the greatness of Shiva linga and its worship.

FIRST CANTO PRATHAM SARG

Shiva is both invisible as well as the root cause of all the delusions of the world. This is why Shiva is also known as Alinga (unknowable). Linga is nothing but the non-manifested (Auyakta) form of Shiva. This implies that the visible world is the medium through which Shiva manifests himself. Nature (Prakriti) in itself is devoid of qualities like smell, taste, touch etc. But, all these qualities become apparent in it only because of Shiva, who is imperishable and whose characteristics are the natural qualities like taste, smell, touch and sound.

The whole world along with the gross and subtle has originated from Alinga Shiva. The whole world comes into being with the help of eleven components-10 sense organs and mind. It is pervaded by the delusions of 'Alinga Shiva'. The three prominent deities—Brahma Vishnu and Mahesh are the manifestations of Shiva. He is the creator in the form of Brahma, the nurturer in the form of Vishnu and the annihilator in the form of Mahesh.

Nature is pervaded by the delusion of Shiva, which is also known as Ajaa (unborn). The three basic colour -red, white and black are the symbolic expressions of the three qualities Raja, Sat and Tamo respectively. Majorities of people fall prey to the delusions of this world and get entangled in its illusionary appearances, but there are few that understand the futility of this illusionary world.

With the desire of beginning creation, the supreme Almighty manifest himself in the imperceptible which results into the creation of the Mahattatva (five basic elements). From Mahattatva manifests the ego or 'ahankara which comprises of three gunas. From Ego manifests the Tanmantras or subtle forms of matter-sound, form, taste smell and touch. Among these subtle forms of matter, Sound came into being first of all and space originated from it. The second tanmantra, touch originated from the space. Air manifested from touch or sparsh. The third tanmantra, form or roopa originated from air or Yayu. Fire or Agni manifested from roopa. The fourth tanmantra, taste or rasa manifested from Agni.

Similarly, water or Jal manifested from Rasa, smell or Gandha from Jal and Earth manifested from Gandha respectively.

All the five organs of action (Karmendriya) sense organs and mind originated from pure Ego (Satva ahankara). In course of time all these elements got transformed into a mammoth egg (Anda), inside which Lord Brahma manifested himself. The whole universe is said to be established inside the above mentioned egg.

The egg is covered by seven layers and Lord Brahma dwells inside it, seated on a lotus flower. The mammoth egg contains crores of universes inside its fold.

17.1.2 The Beginning of Creation

The whole creation lasts for the total period equivalent to Brahma's day. The almighty God created during daytime and annihilated during night. One day of Lord Brahma is equivalent to one Kalpa of this world. The cycle of four Yugas occur periodically for 1000 times, during which period altogether fourteen Manus take incarnation, one after another. Satyuga consists of 4000 years.

Fifteen Nimesha make one Kashtha (unit of time measurement) Thirty Kalas make a Muhurta, fifteen Muhurta a day and night each.The dark lunar phase is said to be the day, while bright lunar phase is said to be the night of the manes. One year of this world consists of 360 days.The deities' day lasts for the full period, when the sun is positioned towards the north of equator. Similarly, the deities' night lasts for the total period when the sun is positioned towards the south of equator. One year of the deities is equivalent to thirty years of this world. Similarly three months of the deities are equivalent to one hundred months of this world.

Each of the four Yugas is measured on the basis of divine years. Satya Yuga is equivalent to 40,000 divine years, while Treta Yuga is equivalent to 80,000 divine years. Dwarpar Yuga is equivalent to 20,000 years of the deities, while Kali Yuga is equivalent to 60,000 years of the deities. The period of each Yuga given here is exclusive of the periods of Sandhya (evening) and Sandhyansh (part of evening.)

Lord Brahma commences creation at the fag end of night and all his creations exist for the whole day. When the night descends, everything is annihilated. This is the time when Kalpa ends.

17.1.3 The Origin of Creation

In the initial phase of his creation, Lord Brahma created immovable natural things like trees, mountains etc-then birds and animals. In the process of creation, he created various things and human being was his seventh creation.

First of all Lord Brahma created his Manasputras-Sanak, Sanandan etc, who had no worldly desires. He then created the nine supreme sages—Marichi, Bhrigu, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Daksha, Atri and Vashishth by the help

of his yogic powers. After that, it was the turn of the twelve Prajapatis-Ribhu, Sanatkumar, Sanatan etc. All of them were divine, extremely virtuous and had realized the supreme - self, Brahma.Shatarupa had begotten four children from Swayambhuva Manu-Priyavrata, Uttanpad, Aakuti and Prasuti.

Aakuti was married to a Prajapati named Ruchi, while Prasuti married Daksha. Aakuti gave birth to two children-Dakshina and Yagya. Dakshina had twelve sons.Prasuti-the youngest daughter of Shatarupa had begotten twenty four daughters from Yaksha-Shraddha, Lakshmi, Dhriti, Tushti, Pushti, Megha, Kriya, Buddhi, Lajja, Vapu, Siddhi, Keerti, Khyati, Sambhuti, Smriti, Preeti, Kshama, Sannati, Anusuya, Urja, Swaha, Sura Arani and Swadha. Thirteen of them were married to Dharma-a Prajapati. Khyati was married to sage Bhrigu while Arani married sage Bhargava. Similarly various sages like Marichi, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Ritu, Atri and Vashishth got married with Sambhuti, Smriti, Preeti, Kshama, Sannati Anusuya and Urjaa respectively. Swaha was married to Vibhavasu while Swadha married the Pitrishwaras.

Dharma had begotten all together 15 sons from his thirteen wives-Kaam, Darp, Niyam, Santosh, Alobha, Shrut, Dand, Samay, Body, Mahadyuti, Apramadd, Vinay, Vyavasay, Kshem, Sukh and Yash. Khyati-wife of sage Bhrigu gave birth to Shri who later became the consort of lord Vishnu. She also had two sons named Dhata and Vidhata.

Prabhuti-wife of sage Marichi gave birth to two sons-Puranama and Maarich. She also had four daughters-Tushti, Drishti, Krishi and Apachi.Kshama-wife of Sage Pulaha had many offspring among whom Kardam & Sahishnu were prominent. Preeti, wife of Sage Pulastya had two sons named Dattarnavr and Dahvahu. She also had a daughter named Dwashdwati. Kratu's wife-Sannati had six thousand offspring who became famous as Baalkhilyas.

Smriti-Wife of Sage Angiras had given birth to five daughters— Sini, Vali, Kuhu, Raka and Anumati. Anusuya, wife of Sage Atri had six children-five sons and one daughter. The names of the sons were - Satyanetra, Bhavyamuni, Murtiray, Shanaishchar and Somatha.Urjaa, wife of sage Vashishth gave birth to seven sons-Jyayji, Pundarikaaksh, Raj, Suhotra, Bahu, Nishpaap, Shravan, Tapasvi and Shukra. Agni's consort Swaha gave birth to three sons-Pavamaan, Paavak and Shuchi.

17.1.4 Lord Shiva – The Supreme Liberator

Sati- daughter of Daksha had married lord Shiva much against the wish of her father. Once, Daksha organized a grand yagya in which he did not invite his son-in-law. Sati went to attend the yagya ceremony inspite of Shiva's forbiddance. After seeing her, Daksha calumniated Lord Shiva and made fun of him. This infuriated her to such an extent that she gave up her life by jumping into the sacrificial fire. She was born as Parvati in her next birth and once again got Shiva as her husband.

Once, Lord Brahma requested Shiva to create a world, which was free from death. Lord Shiva refused apprehending its disastrous consequences. Lord Brahma was left with no other option than to commence creation on his own. Meanwhile, Shiva became immovable just like the trunk of a tree (sthanu). Lord Shiva, who is capable of attaining any form. He showers benediction on mankind. He is engrossed in the supreme state of Yoga with effortless case. Nobody can attain liberation without his grace. He is the bestower of religiousness (Dharma), knowledge (Gyan), asceticism (Vairagya) and splendour (Aishwarya). Sinners who do not take refuge in Shiva have to experiences the unbearable tortures of countless hells.

17.1.5 Incarnations of Manu & Vyas

On being asked about the incarnation of Sage Vyas during various eras and Manvantars, Sutji replied-O Brahmin! Now I am going to mention the names of all the incarnations of Vyas who existed during Vaivasvat manvantar of Varah kalp. The names are as follows-Ritu, Satya, Bhargava, Angira, Savita, Mrityu, Shatakratu, Vashishth, Saraswat, Tridhatma, Trivrit, Swayam, Dharm, Narayan, Tarakshu, Aaruni, Kritanjay, Trina, Bindu, Ruksha, Muni, Shakti, Parashar, Jatukarnya and Sri Krishna Dwaipayan.

The names of Manu's belonging to different manvantars of Varah kalp are-Swayambhu, Swarochi's, Uttam, Tamas, Raivat, Chakchhus, Vaivaswat, Savarni, Dharmasavarni, Vishang, Avishang, Shabal and Varnak. All of these Manu's were named according to their appearances and complexions. For example vaivaswat Manu was of dark complexion.

17.1.6 The Essence of Yoga

Yoga means union with God. The state of yoga is impossible to attain without the blessings of Lord Shiva. It needs a concentrated and focussed mind. There are some specific spots in the human body concentrating upon which, enables a man to attain the state of yoga-spot between the eyebrows, lower part of the throat, Navel and six inches above it etc.

The state of yoga can never be attained until and unless a person has fully controlled the tendencies of sense organs. It can be achieved with the help of eight means-Yama (Penance), Niyam (discipline), Aasan (Posture), Pranayam (Breath-control), Pratyahar (restraint of passion), Dharan (retention), Dhyan (concentration) and Samadhi (deep meditation). Each of them holds an important position in the path of yoga.

Describing about the methods of performing yoga, Sutji says— A person should sit with his legs crossed in Padmasan and try to concentrate his mind by fixing his gaze between his eyebrows. He should keep his spine erect. He should meditate either on the form of Omkar or on the form of lord Shiva. Breath control is an important aspect of yogic exercise. A man should exhale deeply for 32 times and then breathe in deeply. He should then retain his breath as long

as possible and visualize lord Shiva within his body. By constant practice he will achieve mastery over this art and a time will come when he will experience divine bliss. This divine bliss can not be experienced unless one has attained a deep state of meditation (Samadhi).

17.1.7 Obstacles in the Path of Yoga

A man experiences numerous obstacles in the path of Yoga-laziness, restlessness confusion, a diseased body etc. The main reason for being lazy is a bulky physique and one's inability to concentrate his mind. Lack of concentration results in restlessness, which is a major obstacle in the path of yoga. If a person in unsure about the results he becomes confused. It is impossible for a person suffering from any disease to concentrate his mind.

All the above mentioned hurdles can be overcome by firm resolution. A man who has successfully overcome all these obstacles might experience other obstacles in the form of siddhis (divine powers). There is a real danger of getting lured by these divine powers. As a result his mind may get distracted from his original goal and he may deviate from his path. The names of these siddhis or divine powers are-Pratibha (having knowledge of past present & future incident), Shravan (being capable of listening to abnormal sounds), Varta (whatever is said becomes true), Darshana (capable of seeing things which can mot be seen by the mortal eyes), Aaswada (being capable of experiencing divine (tastes), Vedana (being capable of relieving other's pain by a mere touch). If a person successfully overcomes all these allurements then he becomes a siddha- or man of accomplishment and divine powers.

17.1.8 Bali – The Realization of Shiva

Lord Shiva showers his blessing on one and all without any discrimination, but virtuous people have special privilege in the sense that it is easier for them to realize Lord Shiva.Once, Parvati asked Lord Shiva as to how a devotee could realize him. Lord Shiva recalled an incident when Lord Brahma had asked the same question. Lord Shiva had told lord Brahma-"Anybody can realize me by having deep devotion towards me. A devotee can meditate upon me in the form of Linga with total devotion. It is only by deep devotion that a man can achieve true knowledge as well as salvation."

17.1.9 Venerableness of Sadyojaat

The sages asked Sutji as to how was lord Brahma able to have a divine glimpse of Sadyojaat. Sutji replied-During the Kalpa named Shwetalohit, once lord Brahma witnessed the manifestation of a divine child who was of mixed (red & white) complexion. The child had a Shikha (topknot) on his head. Considering him to be an embodiment of almighty God, Lord Brahma eulogized that child. Suddenly four children appeared and formed a protective ring around Sadyojaat. The names of these children were-Sunand, Nandan, Vishwanand, and Upanand. All of them were of fair complexion and very handsome.Anybody who is desirous of attaining to Rudraloka must take refuge in Sadyojaat.

17.1.10 Lord Vaamdev

Once, during thirtieth kalpa named Rakta, Lord Brahma was meditating on Parameshthi Shiva. Suddenly a divine child appeared before him who was of red complexion and who had put on red apparels. He was none other than Lord Vaamdev. Lord Brahma immediately realized the divinity of that child and was convinced that he was the embodiment of Almighty God.

Lord Brahma eulogized Vaamdev who was pleased by his devotions. Four divine entities-Virija, Vivahu, Vishoka and Vishwabhavana manifested from the body of Vaamdev. All of them had great resemblance to Lord Vaamdev. Vaamdev preached them on the finer points of religiousness so that mankind could be benefited by this knowledge.

17.1.11 Lord Tatpurush

The thirty-first kalpa was known as Peet Kalpa. The term 'Peet' means yellow and this Kalpa was named Peet because Lord Brahma had put on yellow apparels during this Kalpa. Once, while he was meditating on the form of Lord Shiva, a divine child manifested before him. The child had a halo of light all around him and had put on yellow coloured clothes. Even his turban, sacred-thread and garland were yellow in colour. His arms were abnormally long.

Lord Brahma immediately realized that the child was none other than Lord Maheshwar himself. Suddenly a divine cow appeared from the mouth of Maheshwar, who had four faces and possessed all the thirty-two qualities. The divine cow was none other than Goddess Gayatri herself.Lord Brahma eulogized her and Maheshwar was very pleased by his deep devotion. Maheshwar also blessed him with divine knowledge and unrevealed the secret of yoga to him. Right then, many divine children appeared from the body of lord Maheshwar. Each of them had put on yellow apparels and had great resemblance to lord Maheshwar. They were extremely virtuous and served the mankind by giving sermons. After having completed their mission of spreading the message of virtuosity to the mankind, all of them got united with Lord Maheshwar ultimately.

A person, who is desirous of getting liberated from all his sin, must seek the blessings of Lord Maheshwar who is also known as Tatpurush.

17.1.12 Lord Aghoresh

Peet kalpa was followed by Pradhritta kalpa. Black was the predominant colour of this kalpa. Initially, the whole earth was submerged in the water and Lord Brahma desirous of commencing his creations wished for a son. As a result, a divine child manifested whose complexion was dark. Not only that he had put on black apparels and a black crown on his head. A black sacred thread was hanging across his shoulder.

Lord Brahma immediately recognized Aghoresh and eulogized him. Lord

Aghoresh became pleased by his devotion and blessed him. Just like the preceding Kalpas, four divine children manifested from lord Aghoresh's body. All of them had great resemblance with Aghoresh in every respect. In course of time, they did tremendous penance and preached the virtue of religiousness to the mankind. A person who worships Lord Aghoresh and has deep devotion in him becomes liberated from gravest of sins like Brahmhatya (sin acquired due to killing a Brahmin) etc.

17.1.13 Lord Ishaan

In the beginning of Vishwaroopa kalpa, lord Brahma, desirous of commencing creation was engrossed in deep meditation. This resulted into the manifestation of a divine cow, which puzzled lord Brahma very much. Actually, this divine cow was none other then Vishwaroopa Saraswati, but lord Brahma failed to recognize her. Lord Brahma decided to take the help of Lord Ishaan and started meditating on him.

When Lord Ishaan appeared before him, he was requested by Lord Brahma to shed light on the identity of that divine cow. Lord Ishaan replied by saying-"The present kalpa is called Vishwaroopa kalpa. It has originated from the left side of my body and is the thirty-third kalpa. This divine cow has also originated from me. She is goddess Gauri-the source of all creation. After saying like this, Lord Ishaan created four divine entities from the body of the cow-Jati, Mundi, Shikhandi and Ardhamund. All of them were very luminous and virtuous. After preaching the world for thousands of divine year. They got reunited with lord Rudra.

17.1.14 The Origin of Shiva Linga

The sages asked Sutji— Lord Shiva is formless then how come Shiva Linga is worshipped? What is the significance of Shiva Linga? What is the proper method of worshipping a Shiva Linga ?

Sutji replied— Once, Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu developed serious different on the matter of superiority. A tremendous duel broke out between them. As they were fighting a mammoth Linga appeared on the scence, the effulgence of which made efforts both of them amazed.Both of them decided to find out the origin of that divine Linga. Lord Brahma transformed his appearance into that of a swan and flew up in the sky to determine the height of that Linga. Lord Vishnu transformed himself into a roar and entered the depth of earth to find the source of that Shiva Linga. But both of them failed in their objectives and returned to the same place exhausted.

Suddenly, they heard a loud sound of AUM emanating from the Shiva Linga. Very soon, the whole form of OM, consisting of all the three letters A, U and M became visible. (The letters A, U and M symbolize Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh respectively).

At last, both of them realized their mistake and stopped quarrelling. This way,

Lord Shiva was successful in subduing their arrogance.Lord Rudra is beyond sensual perception. He is the supreme Almighty and the bestowers of divine bliss. The mystical form of Shivalinga is a symbolical expression of sacred mantra-AUM. The letter A symbolizes Beeja (Seed), M the creator himself and U is the symbolical expression of Yoni (Vagina).

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17.2Linga Purana Part 2

This section contains 13 sub-sections (to follow):

17.2.1 Lord Shiva Blesses Brahma and Vishnu

At the time, when this incident of mystical Shiva linga had occurred and after which Lord Brahmaand Vishnu had stopped quarelling, Lord Shiva appeared before them and said—
"I am very pleased with both of you, Both of -

" O Vishnu! You are the creator, Lord Shiva. This made Lord Shiva extremely pleased and he the preserver as well as the destroyer of this world. I am the supreme you, though having distinct identities have actually manifested from my body-Brahma from my left side and Vishnu from my right." almighty and distinct from all three of you-Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.Lord Vishnu expressed his undiluted devotion towards Lord Shiva. This made Lord Shiva extremely pleased and he said.

"O Vishnu! You are the creator, the preserver as well as the destroyer of this world. I am the supreme almighty and distinct from all three of you-Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh."

Linga is the personification of the Almighty God. The term Linga means fusion and the Shivalinga are said to be the symbolical expression of all the deities.

17.2.2 The Manifestation of Lord Brahma

The Sages requested Sutji to elucidate how Lord Brahma emerged from the navel of Vishnu seated on a lotus flower.

Sutji replied— At the time of deluge Lord Vishnu went in his yoganidra lying on the back of Sheshnag. As the result of his divine play, a huge lotus flower along with a long tubular stalk emerged from his navel. Lord Brahma was seated on the Lotus flower.When Lord Brahma saw Lord Vishnu, he asked-"Who are you sleeping in this ocean?'' Lord Vishnu also asked the same question as to whom was he and from where had he manifested. Very soon, a quarrel ensures between them.Desirous of knowing the identity of the stranger, Lord Vishnu

entered Brahma's abdomen through his mouth. He was amazed to find the existence of whole universe inside Brahma's abdomen. He remained there for thousands of year but could not find the end. Being exhausted, he came out and told Lord Brahma that even his abdomen had the same unlimited expanse.

Lord Brahma decided to check the authenticity of Vishnu's statement and entered into his abdomen through the mouth. Lord Brahma wandered inside the abdomen for thousands of year but could not find the end. Mean while, Lord Vishnu has shut each and every opening of his body which made it impossible for Lord Brahma to come out. Ultimately he was successful in coming out through the tubular stalk of the lotus.As Lord Brahma was not amused by Vishnu's behaviour, he started fighting with him. Right at that moment, Lord Mahadev arrived there. His moments created high tide and strong mind, which vigorously shook the lotus flower.

Lord Vishnu immediately realized that these signs forebode the arrival of Mahadev. He revealed this fact to Brahma and about Manadev's greatness. But Lord Brahma was not impressed. Lord Vishnu then said —

"Shiva is the almighty God. He is the one, whom, enlightened people are always in search for. He manifests himself in the form of an egg on account of the union of his formless and with form appearances. In course of time the egg gets divided into two halves, from which are created the different Lokas (world). The egg is the very place from where originates the whole creation. Even you (Brahma) own your existence to that egg. Your arrogance might invite the wrath of Shiva. So, come let both of us eulogize and praise the holy name of Mahadev.

17.2.3 Lord Brahma Becomes the Creator

At last, Lord Vishnu was successful in convincing Brahma of Shiva's supreme status. Both of them eulogized and sang hymns in the praise of Lord Shiva.Lord Shiva became very pleased by their devotion. He requested Lord Vishnu wanted nothing else but undiluted devotion in him. Lord Shiva agreed and said "So be it".

Lord Shiva then blessed Brahma and made him the creator. Lord Brahma did a tremendous penance, which continued for a very long period. The severe penance strained his eyes as a result of which tears started rolling down his cheeks. Poisonous snakes manifested from those teardrops. Lord Brahma became disillusioned by his maiden creation and gave up his life. Eleven Rudras emerged from his body and started wailing. They then brought Lord Brahma back to life.After becoming alive, Lord Brahma eulogized Vishveshwar and goddess Gayatri. He was amazed to see the existence of whole universe inside the body of Lord Vishveshwar all the kalpas including the different incarnations of lord Shiva about origin of these kalpas and various incarnations like sadya, etc.

17.2.4 Description of Different Kalpas

Lord Shiva revealed to Brahma that the Shwet-kalpa derived its name from his complexion. "I took incarnation attired in white apparels. My complexion was fair. You being self-begotten were able to recognize me. Goddess Gayatri had also manifested from my body and later on became famous as 'Shwet-Lohit-Brahm'."

"The next kalpa was known as Lohit kalpa because of my red complexion, Goddess Gayatri had also incarnated in the form of divine cow. I became famous as Vaamdev during this kalpa."

Lord Shiva then went on to describe about the rest of the kalpas which had been named after his complexion. He also gave in-depth description of various subjects like, the different worlds, the vedas the four major castes etc.

17.2.5 Incarnations of Shiva During Various Dvapar Yugas

On being enquired by Lord Brahma about his various incarnations, Lord Shiva said —

"I shall incarnate as Shwet-Mahamuni during 1st Dwapar yuga of Vaivaswat manvantar. My abode shell is at Chhogal peak of Himalaya mountain. I shall have four disciples who will be proficient in the Vedas."

"I will incarnate as Sutar during second dwapar. At that time, Saddyojaat Prajapati will be holding he post of Vyas.I will have four sons-Dundubhi, Shataroopa, Richika and Keluma."

"During third dwapar and at the time when Sage Bhargav will be acting as a Vyas, I will take incarnation as Daman. I will have four sons-Vikrosh, Vikesh, Vipash and Paapnashak."

"During fourth dwapar and at the time when Sage Angira will be acting as a Vyas, I will take incarnation as Suhotra. I will have four sons-Sumukh, Durmukh, Durdhar and Duratikram."

"I will take incarnation as Kank during fifth dwapar and at the time when Sage Savita will be fulfilling the obligations of Vyas; I will have four sons-Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatan and Sanatkumar."

"During Sixth dwapar, I will take incarnation as Laugakshi. At that time Sage Mrityu will be holding the post of Vyas. My sons will be Sudhama, Viraja, Shankh and Padraj."

"Sage Shataritu will act as Vyas during Seventh dwapar. I will have four sons-Saraswat, Megh, Meghvah and Suvahan."

"Sage Vashishth will be the vyas during eighth dwapar. I will take incarnation as Dadhivahan. My sons will be-Kapil, Aasuri, Panch, Shikhomuni and Vashkal."

"Sage Saraswat will act as Vyas during nineth dwapar. I will take incarnation as Rishabh. I will have four sons-Parashar, Garg, Bhargav and Aangiras."

"The tenth dwapar will see Tripad fulfilling the duties of Vyas. I will incarnate as Bhavita Muni. I will have four sons-Bala, Bandhu, Niramitra and Ketu."

"Sage Trivat will be the Vyas during eleventh dwapar. I will take incarnation as Ugra. My sons will be-Lambodar, Lambaksha & Lambakesh."

"Sage Shatateja will perform the duties of Vyas during twelfth dwapar. I will have four sons-Sarvagya, Sambuddhi, Saadhya and Sarva."

"Dharma will be the Vyas during thirteenth dwapar. I will take incarnation as Bali and live at the hermitage of the Baalkhilya. I will have four sons-Sudhama, Kashyap, Vashishth and Viraja."

This way, Lord Shiva elaborated upon his various incarnations till the period of twenty-eight dwapar, which went as follows.

DWAPAR	VYAS	SHIVA	SHIVA'S SONS
14th	Tarakshu	Gautam	Atri, Devarudra, Shravan & Shrivishthak
15th	Traiyyaruni	Vedshira	Kuni, Kunibahu, Kusharir & Kunetrak
16th	Deva	Gokarn	Kashyao, Shukracharya, Chyavn & Vrihaspati
17th	Kritanjay	Guhavasi	Utathya, Vamadev, Mahayoga & Mahabal
18th	Ritanjay	Shikhani	Vachashrava,Richik,Shyavashva & Yateeshwar
19th	Bhardwaj	Jatamali	Hiranyabh, Kaushal, Laungakshi & Kuthumi
20th	Gautam	Attahaas	Sumantu, Varvari, Kavandh & Kushi Kandhar
21st	Vachashrava	Daruko	Rampkshoda, Bhayani, Ketuman & Gautam.
22nd	Shushmayan	Langli Bheem	Dharmik, Mahayotri, Bhallavi, Madhupinga,Shwetu, Ketu & Kush
23rd	Trinabindu	Kalanjar	Ushik, Vrihadashva, Deval & Kavirevach
24th	Riksha	Shooli	Shalihotra, Agnivesh, Unashva & Sharadvasu.

25th	Shakti	Dandi-Mundishvar	Chhagal, Kundak, Kumbhand & Prawahaj
26th	Parashar	Sahishnu	Ulook, Viddyut, Shambuk & Aashwalayan.
27th	Jatuk Karnya	Somsharma	Akshapad, Kumar, Ulook & Vatsa.
28th	Dwaipayan	Lakuli	Kushik, Garg, Mitra & Kaurushya

17.2.6 Rituals of Shiva-Linga Worship (Purity)

Once, Goddess Parvati asked Lord Shiva about the proper methods of worshipping Shiva-linga. While Shiva was elucidating upon the rituals, Nandi who was present there too got enlightened on this sacred topic. In course of time, this knowledge was passed on to Sanat Kumar, who in turn revealed it to Sage Vyas. Sutji came to know about it from Shailadi.Lord Shiva had described the following three methods, by the help of which a devotee should become pure before commencing his worship.

- Varun Snan (Taking bath in open)
- Bhashma Snan (Smearing ashes on the body)
- Mantra Snan (Chanting of mantra)

Lord Shiva had stressed upon the importance of taking bath in a river or a pond. According to him a man's mind, which is like a lotus, could never blossom unless it received the radiance of the sun. Describing about the methods of taking Bhasmsnan, he said-After washing his hands and feet, a devotee should smear any of the following things on his body to make it pure-mud, cowdung ashes etc. While smearing mud on his body, he should chant the mantra - Uddhatashivarahen. After becoming pure according to the methods mentioned above, he should then worship Lord Varun. Having done, this, he should take a dip in the river after purifying the water by chanting the sacred 'Adhamarshan' mantra. He should then worship all the deities by sprinkling water from the Shankh (Conch) and amidst the chanting of mantras like 'Rudren Pavamanen' etc. He should then concentrate upon the form of a Shivalinga. He should drink some water holding some Kusha grass in his right hand simultaneously.

A devotee should commence his worship only after becoming pure. In the beginning he should perform Pranayam for three times so that his lungs are filled up with fresh air. After this, he should concentrate his mind on the form of Lord Trayambak in all his glory. He should purify all the articles required for the worship by performing ablution and by chanting OM NAMAH SHIVAY. He should also make offerings of flowers, rice grains, barley etc. to the deity. Worship of Lord Shiva is believed to be incomplete without the worship of his family-Nandi, Kartikeya, Vinayak and Goddess Parvati. So, the devotee must not forget to worship them.

17.2.7 Lord Shiva Tests the Patience of Sages

Once upon a time, the sages were busy doing their penance to please Lord Mahadev. Lord Shiva decided to test patience and visited daruk forest in naked position. By the virtue of his divine power, he was successful in corrupting the conduct of the sage's wives. Those women became so infatuated by his divine appearance that they lost control omen themselves. They were desirous of satiating their lust but Shiva maintained silence and did not oblige them.

When the sages saw the womenfolk in such a pitiable condition, they started abusing Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva did not respond and disappeared from the scene. Now, the sages became very frightened. All of them went to Lord Brahma and narrated the whole incident. Lord Brahma reprimanded them by saying that how unfortunate they had been in not recognizing Lord Shiva- the Almighty. Lord Brahma said-"You have committed a grace sir by showing disrespect to your guest. Your conduct was unlike Sudarshan-a Brahmin who by his hospitality was able to win the lord of death."

Lord Brahma narrated the following tale to them —

"Once there lived a kind hearted Brahmin named Sudarshan. He was very hospitable and considered his guests, as Lord Shiva himself. He had given strict instructions to his wife that under no circumstance should a guest return unsatisfied from his home."

"Dharmaraj wanted to test Sudarshan firmness in his belief. One day he arrived at Sudarshan's hermitage disguised as a Brahmin. At that time he was not present in his hermitage. Dharmaraj refused to accept anything in donation except Sudarshan's wife herself.

"Sudarshan's wife offered herself without any hesitation. When he returned, not finding her wife started calling her name. At that time he heard a voice saying that his wife was satisfying the lust of a guest. Sudarshan remained unperturbed and requested his guest to carry on till he is satisfied."

"Dharmaraj became pleased. He appeared before Sudarshan and gave blessings. He appreciated his hospitable nature by saying that by the virtue of his undiluted hospitality he had even vanquished him (Dharmaraj)."

The sages were very ashamed of their conduct and returned Lord Brahma to explain as to how they could have devotion in Lord Shiva. Lord Brahma elucidated on the virtue of devotion and narrated the tale of sage Shwet who had subjugated even death by his devotion.

17.2.8 Sage Shweta

The sages were very curious to know about sage Shwet. Lord Brahma narrated the following tale —

"Once, there lived a sage named Shwet. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He lived in a cave and engaged himself in severe penance, continuously chanting the holy name of Shiva. When the time of his death approached, 'Kaal arrived there to take his life. Sage Shwet started eulogizing Lord Shiva. He challenged 'Kaal' that being a devotee of Shiva he was beyond the reach of death. But, Kaal made fun of him and told him that nobody could escape death. Sage Shwet had unshakable faith in Lord Shiva. Pointing towards the Shiva Linga, he told Kaal that he would remain unharmed because of Lord Shiva who was present in that Shivalinga.

Suddenly, Kaal tied him with his noose and said—See, Now you are absolutely under my control and even your deity seems to be helpless. To protect his devotee, Lord Shiva arrived on the scene accomplished by Goddess Amba, Ganapati and Nandi. 'Kaal' got scared to such an extent that he fainted and died."

The sages curiously asked Lord Brahma about the means with which Shiva could be pleased. Lord Brahma told them that only deep devotion and nothing else could please Lord Shiva.

17.2.9 Sage Eulogizes Lord Shiva

Having realized their mistake, the sages returned to Daruk forest and engaged themselves in austere penance to please Shiva. They did a tremendous penance, which lasted for a year. Ultimately their wished were fulfilled as Lord Shiva appeared with ashes smeared all over his body. He had a begging-bowl in his hands and exhibited strange mannerism. But this time the sages did not fail in recognizing him. They begged for his forgiveness and sought his blessings.

Lord Shiva became pleased and blessed them divine sight, which made them enable to see his form of Trayambak. The illumines appearance of Lord Trayambak cast a spellbound over them. They eulogized Lord Shiva by singing praise in his name. This way, their deep devotion in Lord Shiva had exploited them from their sin.

17.2.10 Lord Shiva Preaches the Sages

Lord Shiva revealed to the sages that a female sex organ was nothing but a symbolic expression of goddess Parvati where as a male sex organ symbolized his own self. He also cautioned them against making fun of hermit's appearance. He said-"These hermits who appear absured by their looks are my great devotees. They don't care about their physical appearance because I predominantly occupy their thoughts. Anybody making fun of these 'naked' hermits, whose bodies are smeared with ashes is in fact making fun of me."

Lord Shiva then went on to describe the purity of ash and said— Ash is extremely pure, as it is the residual element of matter, which is left after burning. It is sacred and indestructible. This is why, I smear it on my body. A

person who smears ash on his body becomes liberated from all his sins. It is the destroyer of sin. It is the symbolic expression of my 'Veerya' (Semen).

This way, Lord Shiva enlightened them on various spiritual topics.

17.2.11 Dadhichi Subjugates the Sages (Kshoopa)

There ruled a king named Kshoopa whose friend was Sage Dadhichi. Once they got into argument over the superiority of their respective castes. King Kshoopa was of the opinion that a Kshetriya was superior to Brahmin. Very soon, the dispute took an ugly turn and a duel broke out between them.

Dadhich punched Kshoopa on his head. Kshoopa retaliated by attacking Dadhichi with his weapon named Vajra. The assault proved to be for Dadhichi and he fell down, Before his death he prayed to his guru-Shukracharya and sought his help. Realizing that his disciple was in danger, Shukracharya rushed to the spot, but Dadhichi had already died before he could arrive there.

Shukracharya knew the secret learning-Mritasanjivani Vidya. He brought back Dadhichi alive and advised him to please Lord Shiva to attain invincibility. He also taught Dadhichi the proper methods of worshipping Shiva. Dadhichi did an austere penance and pleased Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva appeared and blessed him with invincibility and also made his bones as hard as Indra's thunderbolt (Vajra).

Dadhichi then went to fight Kshoopa. He kicked Kshoopa on his chest. Kshoopa retaliated by attacking Dadhichi with his Vajra. But this time Dadhichi remained unharmed. Kshoopa was surprised to see his assault going in vain. He decided to take the help of Lord Vishnu and engaged himself in austere penance.

17.2.12 Kshoopa Accepts Defeat

When Lord Vishnu appeared before Kshoopa, he sought his help in defeating Dadhichi. Lord Vishnu expressed his inability by saying— I don't punish a Brahmin, especially if he is a devotee of Rudra. Dadhichi is both, so forget about defeating him. Anyhow, I will try me best to make Dadhichi devoid of his power.

Lord Vishnu then went to Dadhichi's hermitage disguised as a Brahmin. Dadhichi recognized him and came to know about his intentions. He requested Lord Vishnu to go ahead with his demand. "I have conquered fear on account of my total devotion in Lord Shiva" said Dadhichi.

Lord Vishnu did not like his arrogant behaviour. He said-"I know you have conquered fear. But, just for once, say that you are fearful of me, as I am Vishnu."

But, Dadhichi refused to obey his commands. This infuriated Lord Vishnu and he tried to kill Dadhichi with his Chakra. Dadhichi remained unharmed and said-How can this Chakra harm me? Lord Shiva has given whose devotee I am it to you whose devotee I am.

Lord Vishnu tried to use his other weapons but failed to cause any harm to Dadhichi. All the deities came to his help but still their efforts of defeating Dadhichi went futile.Lord Vishnu then tried to impress Dadhichi by his divine powers and showed his divine appearance in which the whole world was visible. Dadhichi gave a befitting reply by showing the whole universe including Lord Vishnu within his body. Lord Vishnu was amazed by his divine powers. Ultimately, Lord Brahma persuaded Lord Vishnu to discontinue the fight. Seeing his lord in such a helpless condition, Kshoopa had no other option but to accept defeat. He tried to pacify Dadhichi anger by asking cursed him as well as all the deities by saying— All of you including the deities and Vishnu will be destroyed in Daksha's yagya as the consequence of Rudra's wrath.

The place where Dadhichi's hermitage was situated later on became famously known as Sthaneshwar. It is considered to be the most sacred place of pilgrimage.

17.2.13 Shilad's Impossible Demand

Once, Shilad did an austere penance to please Indra. He was desirous of begetting a son. When Indra appeared he requested him to bless him with a son who was self-born as well as deathless. Indra expressed his helplessness in fulfilling impossible demand. Even Lord Brahma meets his end after the passage of crores of Kalpas"-said Indra. Shilad tried to convince the validity of his demand by citing the example of Daksha's son who according to his best of knowledge were self-born as well as deathless. Indra told him that it was not true. To prove his point Indra said-"Even Vishnu and Brahma are not self born. Lord Vishnu created Brahma during Meghavahan Kalpa. Some are of the view that Vishnu and Brahma manifested from the left and right sides of Shiva respectively. So, your demand is unsubstantial and without any base."

According to a mythological tale Lord Vishnu manifested from in between the eyebrow of Lord Brahma. At that time Lord Shiva had arrived there to bless both of them.After the departure of Lord Shiva, Vishnu took the incarnation of Varah (Boar) and reestablished the earth in it's original position. Lord Brahma then commenced his creation and in course of time the earth came to be inhabitated by all kind of living creatures.

17.3Linga Purana Part 3

This section contains 13 sub-sections (to follow):

17.3.1 The Characteristics of the Four Eras

Shilad requested Indra to shed light on the special characteristics of each of the four eras.

Indra replied—Lord Brahma created the four eras (yugas)–Satya, Treta, Dwapar and Kali. There eras keep on occuring in a cyclic order where the former is followed by the latter.Saoguna (Pure) prevails during Satyayuga. Rajoguna is the

dominant quality prevailing during tretayuga. During Dwapar yuga both Rajoguna and tamoguna are present. Tamoguna (Dark) is the dominant quality prevailing during Kaliyuga. During Satya yuga, meditation was the means by the help of which a man could achieve salvation while oblation, devotion and donation were said to be the means capable of giving salvation during Treta, Dwapar and Kaliyuga respectively.

The inhabitants of Satyayuga were virtuous and free from sorrow. But, the vice of desire started to raise it's head during Treta and people started being troubled by it. Lord Brahma created the warrior caste Kshatriya for the protection of virtuosity.Lord Brahma propogated the rituals of oblation during Tretayuga. Everything was fine till Tretayuga but there was a drastic change in the human behaviour during Dwapar Yuga. All the vices surfaced and people were troubled by them. Some extraordinary lietarary feats were accomplished during dwapar–Sage Vyas categorized the veda into four sections, all the major puranas were compiled and smritis were written.

Kaliyuga saw the devline of virtuosity and religiousness. Ignorance and false knowledge prevailed everywhere during this era.

17.3.2 Kali Yuga

Describing about the decline in moral values during Kaliyuga, Indra told Shilad– In Kaliyuga, people will be under the total influence of the worldly illusions. Ignorance diseases, fear and hunger will be prevalent everywhere. Famine and drought would occur quite frequently as the fall out of inadequate rain. Sinners would outnumber the virtuous people would deviate from the path of religiousness. Brahmins would lose their superiority and Shudras would become the rulers. Brahmins will not be respected and will be forced to serve the lowlye people. Majority of women would be immoral and progenies would not obey the commands of their parents.

Predicting a grim scenario, Indra stressed great importance of religiousness during Kaliyuga and said– A virtuous deed accomplished in Kaliyuga gives fruits in aday as compared to Treta and Dwapar, which take one year and one month respectively.

17.3.3 Manifestation of Lord Brahma

Once, Lord Brahma did an austere penance to please Lord Shiva. Shiva manifestated as Ardhnarishwar (Partly male partly female) from his forehead and said–'I am your son'. But, the unberabale heat emanating from the effulgence of Ardhanarishwar burnt the whole world including Lord Brahma.

Lord Shiva then separated the feminine part of his body (Goddess Parmeshwari) and instructed her to begin creation.Both Brahma and Vishnu manifested from the body of goddess Parmeshwari.

Lord Vishnu divided his body into two halves and created the world. Lord

Brahma once again did a tremendous penance which lasted for ten thousand years. Once again Shiva manifested from his forehead, but this time as Neelalohit. Lord NeelaLohit became pleased by Brahma's eulogy and blessed him.

17.3.4 Manifestation of Lord Nandishwar

Shilad did a tremendous penance to please Lord Shiva. His penance continued for thousands of year. At last, Lord Shiva appeared before him and said–"I am extremely pleased by you devotion. I shall bless you with a son who will become famous for his knowledge and learning." But, Shilad was desirous of a self-born and immortal son. Lord Shiva said–'Your desire will be fulfilled. Even Lord Brahma had requested me to take an incarnation. I will take birth as your son and my name will be Nandi."

In course of time, Shiva manifested from the oblation site. The deities became pleased after seeing Nandi, who possessed three eyes, four arms and a crown on his head.

17.3.5 The Nether World

Lord Shiva is the source from where all the different worlds originate. People in their ignorance are unware of the fact that the whole universe is nothing but a medium through which Shiva manifests himself.The various worlds like Maha, Jana, Tapa, Satya etc. and all the natural e;ements like earth, Sky ocean etc, owe their origin to Shiva. Underneath the earth lies the netherworlds which are all together seven in number– Tala, Vitalo, Sutala etc. The netherworld named Mahatala is the dwelling place of Lord Muchkand and king Bali. Sutala is yellow in colour while Vitalo shines brightly like a coral. Atala is of white colour and Tala has a shade of white.

All these netherworld have the same expanse as the earth. Rasatal is the place where Vasuki resides. Talatal is the dwelling place of mighty demons like Virochan and Hiranyaksha. It is also the place where hell is situated. The netherworld named Sutal is the dwelling place where Tarka, Agnimukh and Prahlada live. Tala is the dwelling place of mighty warriors like Mahakumbh, Hayagreeva etc.

17.3.6 The Seven Islands

The earth consists of seven islands, many rivers, mountains and seven oceans. The Plaksha, Shaalmali, Kush, Kraunch, Shaak and Pushkar. Lord Shiva alongwith goddess Ambika and his ganas dwell in all these seven islands in one form or the other.

The name of the seven oceans are Ksharod, Rasod, Surod, Ghatodakshi, Dadhyarnav, Kshirod and Swadood. LOrd SHiva manifests himself in all of them. Lord Shiva dwells in the ocean named Kshirarnav. King Priyavrata was the grandson of Manu, who ruled during Swayambhuva manvantar. He had ten sons– Agnighra, Agnibahu, Meghatithi, Vasu, Vayushmaan. Jyotishmaan,

Dyutimaan, Havya, Savan etc. Priyavrata had made Aghnighra the king of Jambudweepa. Similarly the islands of Plakshadweepa, Shaalmali, Kushadweepa, Kraunchdweepa, Shaalvadweepa and Pushkar were given to Medhatithi, Vayushmaan, Jyotishmaan, Dyutimaan Havya and Savan respectively. Havya had seven sons who became rulers and the different territories they ruled desired their names from them.

17.3.7 Bharat Varsh

Agnighra–the ruler of Jambudweepa was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He had nine sons–Nabhi, Kimpurush, Harivarsha, Ilavrata, Ramya, Hiranyamaan, Kuru, Bhadrashva and Ketumaal. Agnighra appointed Nabhi the king of Hemakhya. Similarly, Kimpurush, Harivarsha, Ilavrata, Ramya, Hiranyaman, Kuru, Bhadrashva and Ketumaal were given the kingdoms of Hemakoot, Naishadh, Meru, Neelachal, Shwet, Shringavarsh, Maalvan and Gandhamoodan respectively. After this, Agnighra renounced everything and went to do penance.

Merudevi was Nabhi's wife and the mother of Rishabh. After growing up Rishabh got married and became the father of no less than one hundred sons. Among them Bharat was the eldest. When Bharat grow up, Rishabh appointed him as his successor and after renouncing everything went to the forest.

Bharat went on to become a great king and ruled over the whole territory southwards of Himalaya. Our country derives it's name from him. Bharat had a son named Sumati who succeeded his father as a king.

17.3.8 The Meru Mountain

Meru mountain is situated in the heart of Jambudweepa. The Meru range is spread in the area of 16 thousand yojan. It's towering peak is 84 thousand in height from the ground level and had even penetrated the depth of earth to the measurement of 16 thousand yojan. Meru mountain is considered to be very sacred and is believed to be the dwelling place of the deities.

Yamraj's abode–Vaivaswatipuri is situated in the souther part of Meru mountain. SOme other holy places like Shuddhavati, Gandhavati and Yashomati are also situated on this mountain where Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva are believed to have their respective abodes.The sun continuously shines over Meru mountain. A river named Jambu flows down this mountain. There is also a tree by the same name which is eternally ladden with fruits. The Meru mountain is surrounded on all its sides by a country Ilavrita. The residents of Ilavrita relish the fruits of Jambu tree.

17.3.9 The Prominent Mountains

Describing about the physical characteristics os all tje seven islands, Sutji says –-

"Seven mountains are situated in Plaksha dweepa-Gobhedak, Chaandra, Narad, Dundubhi, Soyak, Sumana and Vaibhraj. Similarly, the prominent mountain

ranges situated in Shaalmali dweepa are Kumud, Uttam, Balahak, Drona, Karkamahish Kumudman etc. Kushadweepa also has seven mountains among which Vidhrabh and Hem are the prominent ones. All these seven islands are surrounded by seven oceans. The mountain named Lokalok is so gigantic in size that half of its part is always covered in darkness.

The omnipresent Lord Shiva pervades the whole universe. Once, being confronted by the effulgence of Lord Shiva, who had disguised himself as a Yaksha, all the deities became devoid of their power. Indra was amazed and asked the Yaksha as to who he was. Lord Shiva disappeared without giving any answer and goddess Ambika appeared before the deities. Indra asked her the same question to which goddess Ambika replied— He was none other than the almighty Shiva. I being the Prakriti (nature) do creation following his instructions. He is the embodiment of Purush (Supreme almighty).

17.3.10 The Sun

The movement of Sun is rapid when it is positioned south of equator (Dakshinayan), on the other hand its movement is slow when positioned north os equator (Uttarayan).The time is indicated by the various positions of Sun while it is on its course of movement in the horizon. While the sun is situated in the South-East direction it is believed to be the morning time. SimilarIt, when the Sun has positioned itself in the south-west, North-west or South-East direction, it is said to be the 'before-noon', 'after-noon' and Night respectively.

The Sun is believed to be mounted on a chariot while on its course of movement in the Horizon. All the deities, apsaras and gandharvas are believed to follow its movement.The periods of day and night consist of 30 ghadi each. The Sun causes rainfall due to the process of evaporation. Water is the source of life and is the manifestation of Lord Shiva himself.

17.3.11 Lord Brahma assigns lordships to the Deities

The Sages requested Sutji to describe how Lord Brahma assigned Lordships to all the deities and the demons.

Sutji replied— The Sun was made the lord of all the planets. Soma was made the lord of all the constellations and medicinal herbs. Similarly, Vaun was made the Lord of water, while Kuber was assigned the Lordship of wealth. Lord Vishnu attained the Lordship of Aadityas, Pawak of Vasus, Daksha of Prajapatis, Indra of deities, and Prahlad attained the Lordship of all the demons. Some other prominent species and the assigned Lordships are as follows—

SPECIES	LORD
Animals	Rudra
Women	Uma
Rudras	Neelalohit
Obstacles	Gajanan
Power of Speech	Saraswati

Mountains	Himalaya
Rivers	Ganga
Oceans	Ksheersagar
Trees	Peepal (Holy Fig)
Gandharvas	Chitrarathi
Serpents	Takshak
Birds	Garuda

Prithu was made the lord of Earth and Lord Shiva the lord of whole universe.

17.3.12 The Chariots of the Sun, Moon and Planets

The chariot of Surya is believed to have been created by Lord Brahma. It is made up of gold and its wheels have five spokeseach. The chariot is very huge in size and its expanse covers the area of nine thousand yojan. It is pulled by seven horses which are of green complexion. The movement of Sun results into the occurence of day and night. The moon's chariot consists of three wheela and is pulled by ten white horses. Each wheel is supported by one hundred spokes.The chariots of Mercury, Mars and Jupiter are believed to be pulled by eight horses each. The chariot of Saturn is believed to be pulled by ten black horses.

17.3.13 The Radiance of Surya

The Surya is the source to which all the living beings owe their existence. All the deities derive their effulgence from Surya, who in turn derives its own radiance from Lord Mahadev.Time is determined with the help of Surya's movement. One can not even imagine the various units of time, like Kshana, muhurta day, night, fortnight, month, season etc. without the existence of Surya.

The Sun, which illuminates the whole world is nothing but the medium through which the almighty Rudra manifests himself. The Sun sheds thousands of rays among which seven are prominent-Sushumna, Rishikesh, Vishwakarma, Vishwatyacha, Annadh, Sarvavasu and Swarah.

17.4 Linga Purana Part 4

This section contains 12 sub-sections (to follow):

17.4.1 Dhruva – The Supreme Devotee

The Sages asked Sutji as to how Dhruva became successful in attaining immortality and supreme status among all the stars.

Sutji narrated the following tale—

There lived a king named Uttanpad, who had two queens–Suniti and Suruchi. The eldest queen Suniti had a son named Dhruva. One day while Dhruva was sitting in his father's lap, Suruchi–his step mother, contemptuously pulled him from Uttanpad's lap and made her own son sit in his place. Dhruva went to Suniti and complained about his steps mother's behaviour.

Suniti advised Dhruva that he should seek for the supreme status, which is permanent. Following his mother's advice, Dhruva went to the forest in search of that supreme status. In the forest, he met Sage Vishwamitra who advised him to seek the blessings of Lord Keshav by chanting the sacred mantra 'Om Namo Vasudevay'.

Dhruva did an austere penance for thousands of year. At last, lord Vishnu became pleased and appeared before him mounted on Garuda. Lord Vishnu touched Dhruva's face with his conch as a result of which he attained Self knowledge. Lord Vishnu blessed Dhruva by saying —

I give you the supreme place, which even the deities and the sages long for.

This way, Dhruva attained a supreme status among all the stars with the blessings of Lord Vishnu.

17.4.2 The Origin of Deities

On being enquired by the sages about the origin of deities, demons and other celestial entities, Sutji said– Daksha being desirous of enhancing the population, created ten-thousand sons merely by his wish and instructed them to contribute in the propagation of population. His objective remained unfulfilled as Narad was successful in preaching them towards the path of devotion. As a result all of them went to do meditation after renouncing the world.

Seeing his efforts go in vain, Daksha created ten thousand more sons who were convinced by Narad to the path of renunciation once again.Daksha then begot sixty daughters from his wife named Vairini. When these girls grew up, Daksha married to different sages–ten of them were married to Dharma, thirteen to Kashyap, twenty-seven to Soma, four to Arishtanemi, two to Bhrigu's son, two to Krishashwa and the remaining two were married to Angira.

The named of Dharma's wives were Marutivati, Vasu, Aryama, Lamba, Bhanu, Arundhati, Sankalpa, Muhurta, Sadhya and Vishwabhamini.Vishwabhamini was the mother of Vishvedeva, while Sadhya gave birth to Sadhva. Similarly, Marutvati, Bhanu, Muhurta, Lamba and Sankalpa gave birth to Varutwan, Bhanav, Mahurtik Ghosh and Sankalp respectively. Vasu became the mother of eight Vasus.

Among the twenty seven wives of Kashyap the names of some prominent ones were–Aditi, Diti, Arishta, Surasa, Muni, Surabhi, Vinata, Tamra, Krodha, Vasha, Ila, Kadru, Twishad, Anga etc.Kashyap had two sons from Diti, Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. Danu gave birth to one hundred sons among whom Viprachit was very prominent. Tamra gave birth to six daughters—Shuki, Sweni, Sugreevi, Gridhika, Bhasi and Shuni.

Kashyap did an austere penance and was blessed with two sons–Vatsar & Asit, Vatsar had two sons–Naibudh and Raimbh. Asit married Ekparna and had one son from her–Brahmanishth.Vashishth was married to Arundhati and had one hundred sons from her among whom Shakti was the eldest. Shakti was married to Adrishyanti and Parashar was his son. Dwaipayan was the son of Parashar and Shukra was Dwaipayan's son.

17.4.3 Sage Parashar

The Sages asked Sutji how Shakti had been devoured by a demon named Rudhir.

Sutiji replied— Once, Sage Vashishth was presiding over a grand Yagya being organized by a king named Kalmashpad. Vashishth had a rivalry with Vishwamitra. On seeing Vashishth busy in that Yagya, Vishwamitra instigated Rudhir– a demon, to kill his sons. Rudhir followed the instructions and devoured Vashishth's sons including Shakti.

When Vashishth learnt about his sons death his heart was filled with grief. He desired to give up his life but was prevented from doing so by his daughter-in-law. She informed him about her pregnancy and said– Very soon you will see your grandson. So, quit the idea of giving up your life.Vashishth, though still mournful of his son's death, postponed the idea of giving up his life for the time being. One day while he was engrossed in the thoughts of his departed son, he was amazed to listen the recital of a vedic hymn. He looked all around but found nobody. Suddenly he heard a heavenly voice that revealed by his grandson who was still inside the womb of his mother. In course of time, Arundhati gave birth to a son who was named Parashar. One day young Parashar curiously enquired from his mother as to why she did not put on ornaments like other women of her age do. Arundhati kept quite but when Parashar kept on insisting she revealed to him that it was not proper for a mournful women to adorn herself. She also told him how his father–Shakti had been killed by Rudhir, the demon.

Parashar consoled Arundhati by saying that he would avenge his father's lord Shiva. He then made an earthen Shivalinga and started worshipping it by chanting the scared mantras of Shiva-Sukta and trayambak Sukta. Lord Shiva became pleased by his devotion and blessed him with a divine vision which enabled him to see his dead father. Parashar then commenced a yagya with the purpose of annihilating the demons. All the demons started being tormented by the extreme heat generated by that oblation. Vashishth prevented by that oblation. Vashishth prevented Parashar from contiuing with that Yagya as many innocent demons had suffered. Parashar stopped performing the rituals at his father's request.

Sage Pulastya had also been invited in that yagya. He was very pleased by his devotion toward his father and blessed him with the knowledge of all the

scriptures. In course of time, Parashar became famous for his treatise–Vishnu Puran.

17.4.4 The Lineage of Aditya

On being enquired by the Sages about the respective lineage of Aaditya (Sun) and Soma (moon) Sutji replied—

Sage Kashyap had a son–Aaditya, from Aditi. Aadity had four wives–Sangya, Rajyi, Prabha and Chhaya. Sangya gave birth to Manu whereas Ragyi was the mother of Yama, Yamuna and Raivat. Prabha gave birth to Prabhat while chhaya was the mother of three children–Savarni, Shani, Tapti and Vrishti.

Chhaya was extremely affectionate towards her step son– Yama. One day Yama kicked her in anger as a result of which his leg became inflicted with incurable disease. He became cured of his disease only after doing penance for thousands of years at as place called Gokarna.

Manu had nine sons— Ikshavaku, Nabhag, Dhrishnu, Sharyati, Narishyant, Naabhaag, Arisht, Karush and Prishaghna. He also had three daughters–Ila, Jyeshtha and Varishtha who coincidentally attained male physique later on in their life.Ila became famous as Sudyumna and had three sons– Utkal, Gopa and Vinitashva. Harishwa was the descendant of Ikshavaku and had a son named Vasumana. Tridhanva was Vasumana's son. He had attained the designation of 'Ganapatya' by virtue of accomplishing one thousand Ashwamedha Yaga. Tridhanva had a son named Trayyarun and the name of his son was Satyavrata. The same Satyavrata became famous as Trishanku, who was the only person to attain to heaven with his mortal body.

The most truthful king Harish Chandra was the son if Trishanku. Harish chandra had a son named Rohit. Sagar belonged to the lineage of Harish chandra. He had two wives– Prabha had given birth to sixty thousand sons but Bhanumati had only one son named Asamanjas.Anshuman was the son on Asamanjas. Anshuman's son was Dilip. Sage Bhagirath was the son of Dilip.

Some prominent personality who belonged to the lineage of Ikshavaku were Shrut, Naabhaag, Ambarish, Dirghabahu, Dilip (Dirghabahu's son), Raghu, Aja, Dasharath, Ram, Laxman, Bharat, Shatrughna, Lav and Kush. The famous king Pururava also cause from the same lineage. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. His son was Nahush. Nahush had six sons among whom Yayati was the eldest. Yayati had two wives— Devayani and Sharmishtha. Yayati ruled over the whole earth. He had conquered the whole earth with the help of divine weapons and chariot which he had received from his father in law–Shukracharya (Devayani's father).

Yayati had two sons from Devayani– Yadu and Turvasu. He also had three sons from his second wife–Sharmishtha whose names were Drushya, Anu and Puru.Yayati appointed his youngest son Puru as his successor because of his

total devotion towards his parent. Yadu was made the ruler of Southern province.

17.4.5 The Yadu Dynasty

Yadu had five sons among whom Sahastrajeet was the eldest. Shatarjay was the oson of Sahastrajeet and himself had three sons–Haihya, Haya and Venu. Dharma was Haihya's son. Dharmanetra was the son of Dharma and himself had two sons–Kirti and Sanjay.Sanjay's son was Mahishman and Bhadrashrenya was Mahishman's son. Durdam was the son of Bhadrashrenya and Durdam's son was Dhanak.

Dhanak had four sons among whom the youngest –Kartaveerya Arjuna was very mighty. He was killed by Parashuran. Kartaveerya Arjuna had many sons among whom Shoor, Shoorsen, Dhrishta, Krishna and Jayadhuraja were prominent. Jayadhwaja had a very mighty son named Talajangha. Talajangha too had many mighty and brave sons like Veetihotra, Vrisha eetc. Vrisha had a son– Madhu. Madhu's son was Vrishni.

Some other prominent kings of Yadu dynasty were–Praghrajit, Jyamagh, Shrut, Vidarbh, Subhag, Vayu, Kratha, Kaushik, Romapad, Vabhru, Sughriti, Kunta, Ranadhrista, Bheemarath, Navarath, Dhridharath, Karambha, Devaratha, Devakshatrak and Madhu.The famous Kaurava dynasty came from the lineage of Madhu.

17.4.6 Sri Krshna

Aahuka came from the lineage of Yadu. He had two sons– Devak andUgrasen. The eldest son, Devak had eleven children–four sons and seven daughters. The names of his sons were– Devavaan, Upadeva, Sudeva and Devarakshit. All his seven daughters, which also included Devaki were married to Vasudeva. Aahuk's youngest son, Ugrasen had nice sons among Kansa was the eldest.

Vasudeva had a son named Balaram from Rohini. Devaki, one of his wives gave birth of lord Sri Krishna. Vasudeva had exchanged Sri Krishna with the daughter of Yashoda as Sri Krishna's life was under threat from Kansa. When Kansa tried to kill her, She slipped away from her hand and ascended towards the sky. She then thundered. ''There is no use killing me. The person who is supposed to kill you has already taken birth'. Her prophesy came to be truth and Kansa was ultimately killed by Sri Krishna.

Sri Krishna had 16108 Queens among whom Rukmini was dearest. He did an austere penance to please Lord Shiva as the result of which He was blessed with many sons like Charudeshna, Sucharu, Pradyumna etc. He also had a son named Saamb from Jaambawati. Lord Krishna left for heavenly abode after enjoying a long life of 120 years. He had destroyed His whole clan before leaving His mortal body. A hunter named Jara who mistook him to be a deer killed him. Due to the curse of Ashtavakra, Sri Krishna's wives had been abducted by the dacoits.

17.4.7 Lord Brahma blesses the Demons

The Sages asked Sutji as to how did Maya–The demon acquire three well fortified forts from Lord Brahma and how was lord Shiva finally successful in destroying them.

Sutji replied– After Tarakasur's death his three sons, Vidyunmali, Kamlaksha and Tarakaksha did tremendous penance to please Lord Brahma. When Lord Brahma appeared. They expressed their desire of attaining immortality. Lord Brahma refused to oblige them. The demons after consulting each other demanded three invincible forts from him and said 'Only such a person should be able to kill us, who is capable of destroying all the three forts with a single shot of an arrow.'

Lord Brahma blessed them and disappeared. Maya, then did an austere penance and with the help of divine powers attained from it, constructed three forts at three different places. The fort made of gold was situated in the heaven, while the silver-fort was situated in the space. The third fort, which was made of iron, was situated on the earth. The gold-fort was given to Tarakaksha, the silver-fort to Kamalaksha and the iron-fort was given to Vidyunmali. After acquiring these invincible forts all the demons had become extremely arrogant. They started tormenting the deities.

The deities went to Lord Vishnu and requested help. Lord Vishnu created thousands of spirits (Bhootganas) and instructed them to destroy those three forts. But, the Bhootganas were unsuccessful in their attempt and were charred to death. Lamenting their death the deities went to Lord Vishnu and sought help once again. Lord Vishnu was aware that the demons derived their power from Lord Shiva. So, He decided to deviate them from the path of Shiva's devotion. He then created an illusionary entity. The illusionary entity went to the place where demons lived and was successful in influencing them by his illusionary tactics.

All the demons became so impressed by him that they stopped worshipping Lord Shiva and became His disciples. This resulted into a total degradation of moral values among the demons. Finding the time opportune, Lord Vishnu eulogized Shiva who appeared and agreed to destroy those three forts.Vishwakarma made a divine chariot for Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma became the charioteer. Mounted on that chariot, Lord Shiva proceeded towards the demon. All the deities followed him.

Lord Brahma said—'Right now it is Pushya yoga and it is very auspicious for launching and it is very auspicious for launching an attack on the demon's forts.'Lord Shiva then released his arrow, which after destroying all the three forts returned to his quiver. The deities became pleased and eulogized lord Shiva.

17.4.8 Appointment of Andhak as Lord of the Ganas

On being asked by the Sages how Andhak–the demon was appointed as the lord of Ganas by Lord Shiva, Sutji narrated the following tale to them.–The mighty demon, Andhak was Hiranyaksh's son. By the virtue of his austere penance he had received a boon of immortality from Lord Brahma. In course of time he conquered all the three worlds. He started tormenting the deities and as a result of which they had to take refuge in the causes of Mandarachal mountain.

The deities went to Lord Shiva and narrated their woeful tale to him. They also requested him to kill Andhak so that they could live in peace.Lord Shiva went to the place where Andhak lived accompanied by all the deities. When Andhak saw them coming, he attacked menacingly with his various weapons. The deities became scared and started running helter-skelter. Lord Shiva then killed Andhak with his trident. He then lifted the corpse with the help of his trident and kept in that position for a very long period.

The divine sight of Lord Shiva had liberated Andhak from all his sins.Finding himself in a helpless position, Andhak eulogized Shiva and begged for forgiveness. At last, Lord Shiva became pleased and brought Andhak down after lowering his trident. He gave him the designation of a Ganapati and made him the lord of his ganas.

17.4.9 The Liberation of Earth

The Sages were curious to know how Lord Vishnu in his incarnation of Varah (Boar), had liberated the earth from the captivity of Hiranyaksha. They also wanted to know why Lord Shiva adorned himself with the horn of that boar.

Sutji narrated the following tale— Hiranyaksha–Andhak's father was a tyrant. After Vanquishing the deities, he had taken the earth to 'Rasatala'. The deities sought the help of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu then took the incarnation of Varaha (boar) and killed Hiranyaksha with his sharp horns. He then brought the earth from Rasatala and kept it in its original position.

The deities eulogized both Lord Vishnu and mother earth. Lord Shiva adorned and himself with the ornament carved out from the horn of that boar. This is the reason why he is also called 'Danshtri' (wild boar).

17.4.10 Killing of Jalandhar

The Sages requested Sutji to reveal how Lord Shiva had killed the notorious demon– Jalandhar. Sutji narrated the following tale—

There was a demon named Jalandhar. He had manifested from the ocean. He had acquired divine power by the virtue of his austere penance.Jalandhar had defeated the deities and conquered the heaven. He even defeated Lord Vishnu and boasted—'I have conquered everybody. Now! Only Shiva is lift to be

conquered.'

Jalandhar went to fight a battle with Lord Shiva accompanied by a huge army. Lord Shiva was aware of the boon, which Lord Brahma had given to Andhak and which had made him invincible. Jalandhar derived his power from his wife-Vrinda who was an extremely chaste woman.As per the plans of the deities, Lord Vishnu disguised as Jalandhar and went to breach the modesty of Vrinda. Vrinda could not recognize Lord Vishnu and mistook him to be her husband–Jalandhar. Ultimately, Lord Vishnu was successful in his motives.

Meanwhile, the battle had commenced between Jalandhar and Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva destroyed the whole army of Jalandhar by the sight of his third eye. Jalandhar became furious and tried to kill Lord Shiva with the Sudarshan Chakra, which he had snatched from Vishnu. Butas soon as he lifted the Sudarshan chakra, his body got cut into two parts. The death of Jalandhar brought immense joy to the deities.

17.4.11 The Origin of Lord Ganesh

Once, the deities requested Lord Shiva to device some means so that they no longer had to live under the threat of the demons.The most merciful Lord Pinaki Shiva then took the incarnation of Ganeshwar. He had a human body but his heard resembled like an elephant. He held a trident in his hand. All the deities eulogized Lord Ganesh–the Lord of wisdom and the remover of all obstacles. Lord Ganesh is the first deity to be worshipped in any ritual as he is believed to remove all the obstacles. A devotee of Lord Ganesh is free from the fear of failures and achieves success in any endeavour he undertakes.

17.4.12 Shiv Tandav

The deities were curious to know the story behind 'Tandav'- the famous dance of Lord Shiva. So, they asked Sutji how it started and what made Shiva to perform Tandav.

Sutji replied— There lived a demon named Daruk. He had acquired divine powers by the virtue of his austere penance. He started tormenting te deities, sages and all the virtuous people.All the deities went to Lord Shiva and requested him to give protection from the tyrany of Daruk. Lord Shiva then requested Parvati to help the deities. One part of Parvati's consciousness entered into the body of Lord Shiva. But, the deities were not aware of this happening. Goddess Parvati then attained her physical form with the help of poison stored in the throat of Lord Shiva. The effet of poison had made her complexion dark. Lord Shiva then brought her out from within his body through his third eye.

The deities became frightened after seeing her terrific appearance. She was none other than Goddess Kali. Goddess Kali then killed Daruk with the permission of Parvati.But, even after the death of Daruk, her anger did not subside and the whole world was ablaze due to her anger. Lord Shiva then

incarnated as a small child and started crying as if he was hungry. Goddess Kali could not decipher the illusions of Shiva and thought that the child was crying because of hunger. She started feeding the child her breast-milk. In the process of sucking milk, Shiva also sucked out her anger.

The extreme anger of Kali had resulted into the manifestation of eight divine entities who became famous as 'Kshetrapaal. After her anger had subsided Goddess Kali became unconscious. Lord Shiva then performed his famous dance–Tandav for the first time to bring Kali back to consciousness. He was accompanied by all the Ghosts and spirits in his terrific dance. When Kali regained her consciousness she found Shiva dancing. She too started dancing and this is the reason why she is also called Yogini.

17.5Linga Purana Part 5

This section contains 13 sub-sections (to follow):

17.5.1 Upamanyu

The sages were curious to know how Lord Shiva had bestowed the designation of Gaanpatya and an ocean of milk to Upamanyu. They requested Sutji to shed light on the two incidents.

Sutji narrated the following tale —

Upamanyu was a brilliant child. There is an interesting story how he became the supreme devotee of Lord Shiva. Once, during his childhood he had gone to his maternal-uncle's place. One day, while he was hungry he tried to drink some milk. But his cousin did not allow him to drink milk and after snatching the bowl of milk drank himself.

Upamanyu started crying. He went to his mother who tried to console him by giving a solution of powdered grains. But, Upamanyu did not want anything less than milk. His mother said–'You should be satisfied with whatever you get. Perhaps we did not worship Lord Shiva in our past lives. Our hardships are the fallouts of those unpardonable sins. Only a devotee of Shiva is entitled to all kinds of comfort and pleasure.'

Upamanyu decided then and there to please Shiva by his penance and attain an ocean of milk from him. He went to Himalaya mountain and started doing an austere penance. His penance had resulted into the generation of unbearable heat. The deities became terrified and went to seek the help of Lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu along with the deities went to Lord Shiva and sought his help. Lord Shiva decided to test the devotion of Upamanyu. He disguised himself as Indra and went to the place where Upamanyu was doing penance. He started abusing Shiva which made Upamanyu so angry that he tried to kill him. When Upamanyu failed in his attempt to kill Shiva, he tried to kill himself by chanting 'Aagneya mantra'.

Lord Shiva was very pleased by his total devotion and revealed his identity. He blessed Upamanyu and after accepting him as his son granted the designation of Ganpatya. He also provided oceans of milk and curd to Upamanyu.

17.5.2 The Greatness of Dwadashakshar Mantra

On being asked by the sages about the sacred mantra– the chanting of which enabled a man to attain salvation Sutji replied —

Lord Vishnu gives salvation to those people who endeavour to seek Brahm– the Almighty God. A man whose mind is preoccupied with the thought of Lord Vishnu and nothing else is entitled to attain Salvation. Such a man is also blessed by goddess Laxmi."

Describing about the greatness of Dwadakshar mantra, Sutji said –

"The sacrosanct Dwadakshar mantra consists of twelve letters
(as written in devanagri script–'OM NAMO BHAGAWATE VASUDEVAY').
This powerful mantra helps a man to achieve proximity with Lord Vishnu.

'Once there lived a brahmin who used to stammer while talking. All his efforts of making him speak distinctly went in vain as the child continued to lisp. When the brahmin tried to teach his son. the dwadakshar mantra, he incorrectly pronounced 'Vasudev as 'Etareva'. So the child was given the name 'Etareva'.The brahmin became disgusted and married for the second time. He had many sons from his second wife, all of whom were very studious.

Etareva's mother used to curse her fate because of his habit of stammering. One day she said–'Look! I am no more able to tolerate the humiliation of being a mother of a dull child–Look at your step-brothers, who have achieved fame and respect on account of their learning. I have decided to give up my life.' Etareva became very sad. He started chanting the dwadashakshar mantra regularly and as a result a day came, when he could pronounce it correctly and without stammering.

One day Etareva happened to pass by a place where a yagya was being performed. As soon as he reached that place, the priests found to their surprise that they had become dumb. All the priests became restless, as the rituals were still incomplete.Looking at their pitiable condition, Etareva chanted the dwadakshar mantra– **OM NAMO BHAGAWATE VASUDEVAY.** The priest regained their power of speech by the virtue of the flawless pronunciation of the mantra.

Such is the greatness of dwadakshar mantra. Later on, Etareva went on to become a renowned scholar. A person who chants this sacred mantra regularly become liberated from all his sins and attains to Vishnu Lok.

17.5.3 Shadakshar Mantra

Describing about the greatness of Shadakshar mantra that consists of six letters, Sutji said –

The sacred mantra – **OM NAMAH SHIVAY** holds a supreme place among all the mantras. During the Meghavahan kalp of the first Treta yuga, there lived a brahmin named Dhoondhmook. He became a licentious person due to the curse of a sage. As a result he became a man of loose moral conduct. His wife gave birth to a child on the inauspicious day of Amavasya. The astrologers predicted a very bleak future for that new born child.

When the child grew up he became notorious for his sinful conduct. Dhoondhmook married his son in a respectable family but his son being a man of loose character, developed intimacy with a woman belonging to a low caste. One day, Dhoondhmook that son developed sharp differences with that woman on some matter and in a fit of range killed her.When the family members of that woman came to know about her death, they retaliated by killing Dhoondhmook his wife and his daughter-in-law. Sinec, Dhoondhmook's son was not present in the house at that time he survived. He avenged the death of his family members by killing the assasins.

New Dhoondhmook's son had become disillusioned with life. He started wandering aimlessly and reached a hermitage. The sage who lived in that hermitage was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and taught him the rituals of Pashupat Vrata as well as the sacred Shodakshar mantra.Dhoondhmook's son performed the rituals of Pashupat Vrat for twelve months. All the while he kept on chanting the Shadakshar mantra. As the result of his devotion towards Lord Shiva and by the virtue of chanting Sadakshar mantra he as well as all his ancestors attained salvation.

17.5.4 Lord Pashupati

The sages were curious to know why Lord Shiva was also known as Pashupati– The lord of all animals. Sutji retold the same tale which sage Shiladi had once narrated to Sanatkumar —

Once, Sanatkumar went to the hermitage of Sage Shiladi and asked him as to why was Lord Shankar also known as Pashupati. He also inquired about the reason of man's ondages and how could he be liberated from them.

Sage Shiladi replied—All the living beings including Lord Brahma have been referred to animals because of their attachment to worldly desires and ignorance. Lord Shiva being the lord of them is also known as Pashupati. It is none other than Lord Vishnu whose illusionary and divine powers keep them in bondages. It is also only lord Vishnu who liberates them by bestowing the knowledge of Gyan-Yoga.

Nobody can attain salvation without the blessings of Lord Shiva. The nothing but the 24 elements–10 sense organs, 4 type of consciousness, 5 basic elements from which matter is made and 5 subtle forms of matter.A person who worships Lord Shiva with total devotion becomes liberated because devotion is capable of destroying all types of sins.

17.5.5 The Majestic Lord Maheshwar

Lord Maheshwar is beyond the reach if any kind of bondage. He is totally liberated entity. It is only by his blessings that the Nature-Prakriti, creates intelligence–buddhi. Similarly, intelligence creates ego-ahamkara and subtle forms of matter–tanmatra creates the greatest of matter by the blessings of Lord Shiva. No word can describe the greatness of Lord Shiva.It is only with the permission of Lord Maheshwar that our sense organs function the fire burns and all the living beings fulfill their respective duties. Lord Shiva is the Almighty God and goddess Parvati is also called Shivaa. He is the Purusha and she is the nature or Prakriti.

The matter derives it's power from goddess Gauri. Everything that is capable of creating is nothing but the form of Uma. The whole universe is established in the form of Shiva Linga and hence everybody must worship Lord Shiva.

17.5.6 The Sun – Manifestation of Shiva's Power

Lord Shiva manifests himself in the form of Sun. The Sun radiates twelve different types of rays which have specific impacts and influences on the world.

- The first ray is called Amrit and the deities derive their power from it.
- The second ray is called Chandra and it helps in the preservation of medicinal herbs.
- The third ray is called Shukla and it helps in the propagation of religiousness in the world. It also helps the food crops to become ripe.
- The name of the fourth ray is Harikesha and all the constellations get their nourishment from it.
- The fifth ray is called Vishwakarma and it gives the planet mercury.
- The sixth ray is called Sanyadwasu and it nurtures the planet–Mars.
- The seventh ray is called Arvavasu and it nurtures the planet Jupiter.
- The eighth ray is called Surat and it nurtures the planet –Saturn.
- The nineth ray is called Susumana and it nutures the moon, etc.

17.5.7 Shiva Tatva

The learned and sages call Shiva by many names —

Kshetragya, Prakriti Vyakta, Kalatma etc. The synonyms of Kshetragya and Prakriti are Purush and Pradhan respectively.The delusionary net of the Prakriti is known as Vyakta (apparent). Kala (time) is the resultant by product of Pradhan and Vyakta.

Some sages call Hiranyagarbha (Brahma) as the Purush and Shiva as Pradhan. They consider Hiranyagarbha to be the creator and Purush to be the enjoyer. Even these sages are of the opinion that Hiranyagarbho, Pradhan, Purush and enjoyer are the manifestations of Shiva.

17.5.8 The Greatness of Shiva

The almighty Shiva manifested in the form of Sthanu (Pillar) from his imperceptible form and looked at Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma then commenced his creation and established the norms of Vannashram. He also created 'Soma' which is required for the performance of 'Yagya'. This world, including all the deities are the embodiments of Soma. The deities eulogize Lord Shiva by chanting the mantras of 'Rudrashtadhyay'.

Once, Lord Shiva was sitting surrounded by all the deities. On being requested by the deities to shed light on his mysterious self, Lord Shiva said—

"I was present before the beginning of time and I will be present forever. Everything originate from me and get submerged in me ultimately. I am the Lord of Brahma. I am the truth itself. I manifest myself in the forms of Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. I am the light as well as the darkness. I am Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. One who is aware of my omnipresence is the only person who is worthy of being called an enlightened one."

This way, after enlightening the deities on his myssterious self Lord Shiva disappeared.

17.5.9 The Importance of the Guru

A devotee should commence the worship of Lord Shiva only after taking permission from his Guru, Only such a person is worthy of being called a Guru who is virtuous and well versed in the scripture.

A disciple should unwavering by be in the service of his Guru and should try to please him by his devotion because only he (Guru) is capable of liberating him from the miseries of world. A guru should try to test the worthiness of his disciple by employing different means for three years.Once, the Guru has accepted a person as his disciple, he should try to impart all the knowledge to him. He should never discriminate on the basic of caste or creed of a disciple. It is the duty of a Guru to make his disciple destitute of flaws and shortcomings.

17.5.10 The Rituals of Initiation

Before commencing the rituals of initiation, the Guru should purify the place where the rites are supposed to be performed. He should make an attar and

draw an eight-petalled lotus at its centre. He should then establish the various embodiments of Shiva like Aghor, Pranav, Vamadeva, on each of the eight petals.

The Guru should then purify all the directions by chanting different mantras. He should then meditate on the form of Lord Shiva. After that he should make offerings in the sacrificial fire and purify himself by doing aachaman. He should then have Panchagavya as prasadam and smear ashes on his body.

The Guru should instructed his old disciples to sit towards the south of altar. He should make offerings of ghee into the sacrificial fire for 108 times amidst the chanting of Aghor mantra.The new disciple then arrive blindfolded and circumambulate the sacrificial altar for three times. While circumambulating everybody should chant either the mantras of Rudrashtadhyay or Omkar mantra. The new disciple then smear ashes on their bodies amidst the chanting of Aghor mantra. The Guru then sprinkles holy water on the new disciples. In the end the disciple takes a religious vow.

"I shall never have food without worshipping Shiva".

This way the ritual of initiation comes to an end.

17.5.11 Installation of Shiva Linga

Describing about the methods of installing a Shiva Linga Sutji says– A devotee should install a Shivalinga made of either gold, silver or copper. The shivalinga should be installed along with the altar. The altar of the Shivalinga symbolizes goddess Uma. Lord Brahma is said to manifest at the base of Shivalinga while Lord Vishnu at its centre. After the installment of Shivalinga it should be worshipped with appropriate rituals. The Shiva linga should be adorned with clothes and its ablution should be performed.

A devotee should chant the Brahma vigyan mantras for the consecration of Lord Brahma who is supported to manifest at the base of Shivalinga. Similarly, for the consecration of Lord Vishnu dwelling at the centre of Shiva linga, Gayatri at the centre of Lord Shiva is consecrated by the chanting of any of the following mantras—

OM NAMAH SHIVAY; NAMO HANSA SHIVAY CHA

A devotee should then worship the Shivalinga and make offerings in the sacrificial fire.

17.5.12 Vrajeshwari Vidya

The sages requested Sutji to elaborate upon the rituals of Vajravahanika Vidya or Vajreshwari Vidya.

Sutji replied— Anybody who is desirous of Vanquishing his enemy must perform

the rituals of Vajreshwari Vidya. The devotee should worship Vajra (a spear) and make offerings in the sacrificial fire holding it (Vajra) in his hand. The following mantra should be chanted while making offerings.

OM BHURBHUVAH SWAH TATSAVITURVARENYAM BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHI DHIYO YONAH PRACHODAYAT; OM PHAT JAHI HOOM PHAT CHHINDHI MINDHIJAHI HAN HAN SWAHA.

In the past Lord Brahma had taught this secret Vidya to Indra with the help of which he had killed the ferocious demon vritrasur.A man can acquire all the types of supernatural powers with the help of Vajreshwari Vidya. Describing about the rituals of Mrityunjay Jap,

Sutji said– A person who chants Mrityunjay mantra with appropriate rituals becomes free from the fear of death. A devotee is required to make offerings of ghee in the sacrificial fire for one lakh times. Instead of ghee he can also make offerings of ghee and sesame seeds OR dhoob grass, ghee, milk and honey.

17.5.13 Different Types of Yoga

The sages asked Sutji as to how should a devotee meditate on Lord Triyambak following the path of Yoga. Sutji then retold the tale which Mandishwar had once narrated to Sanatkumar–

1. The first type of Yoga is called Mantra Yoga. In this type of yoga a devotee tries to attain deep state of meditation by chanting mantras. The chanting of mantras helps a man to concentrate his mind.

2. The second type of Yoga is known as Sparsh Yoga. In this type of yoga, a man acquires perfection in breath-control by constantly practicing various exercises like Rechak (Exhalation), Kumbhak (retention), etc. These exercises helps to purify the nerves and blood vessels.

3. The third type of yoga is known as Bhava Yoga. This is the state in which a person's mind is totally engrossed in the thoughts of Lord Mahadev. This state of mind can not be attained unless the two former types of yoga have been mastered.

4. The fourth type of Yoga is called Abhava-yoga. When a man has mastered this particular yoga his ego is subdued in totality.

5. The fifth type of yoga is called Maha yoga. It helps a man to understand his real self and get united with the supreme Almighty.

The secret of Yoga should be revealed to worthy disciples–who are virtuous and religious."

This way, Sutji described the divine tales of Linga Puran and blessed the sages.The Linga Puran contains eleven thousand shlokas in it. The study of Linga Puran fulfills all the four worldly aspirations of a man-Dharma, Artha, Kaam and Moksha.It also helps a man to attain salvation.

18 Narad Purana

It is a Vaishnav Purana presented in a style of dialogue between Narad and Sanat kumar in 22 chapters. This Purana contains detailed description of major places of pilgrimage.

Vedas are regarded as the oldest scriptures in the entire known history of human civilization. Even the Vedas speak about Puranas. A shloka in Matsya Purana speaks-

PURAANAM SARVASHASTRAANAAM PRATHAMAM BRAHMANAA SMRITAM ANANTARAM CHA VAKTREBHYO VEDAASTASYA VINIRGATAH

Brahma recalled about Puranas even before starting the creation of other scriptures. Vedas emerged thereafter from his mouth.

It clearly shows the antiquity of Puranas.

There are in all eighteen Puranas. Among them, Narad Purana is perhaps the most significant as it has been created by none other than the sage Narad.

NARDOKTAM PURAANAM TU NAARDIYAM PRACHACHHATE

Meaning- Narad Purana is what emerged from the lips of Maharshi Narad. Initially, it had a collection of about twenty-five thousand stanzas. But, the currently available version of Narad Purana contains not more than twenty-two thousand stanzas.

The whole content of Narad Purana has been divided into two parts. The first part contains four chapters which include dialogue between Suta and Shaunak, origin of the universe, salvation, birth of Shukadev, training of the mantras, worship rituals, provisions and the results of the various fasts observed on particular days in particular months. The second part contains beautiful tales related to various incarnations of Lord Vishnu, depiction and significance of pilgrimage centers and performing pilgrimage.

18.1Penance of the Sages in Naimisharn

Once upon a time, about twenty-six thousand sages assembled in the holy ambience of Naimisharanya. All of them had renounced their desires and homely comforts and were worshipping Lord Vishnu for the benefit of the entire humanity.

During their stay in Naimisharanya, those sages called a huge assembly to discuss about the means of attaining all the four goals of life like Dharma, Arth,

Kama and Moksha. The great sage Shaunak was presiding over the assembly. He said: "O sages! We have assembled here to discuss the most cryptic disciplines of life. But it is beyond my powers to answer the questions you have put before me. Only a great sage like Suta, who is the most learned disciple of Vedavyasa, is able to answer these questions. Presently, he lives in a hermitage in Siddhipeeth. Let us all go there and request him to preach us about the cryptic disciplines of life."

Hearing these words, all the sages thanked Shaunak with joy. Then, led by Shaunak himself, all of them reached the hermitage of the sage Suta. At the hermitage, sage Suta welcomed them all and satisfied their queries. He said:

" O great sages! I narrate to you, the great Purana, which was once narrated by the great saint Sanatkumar to Devarshi Narad and now known as Narad Purana."

18.2 Narad Prays to Lord Vishnu

Shaunak says: "Sutaji, how did Sanatkumar unfold the mystic character of the religion to Narad? When and where they had the meeting to hold this pious discussion? Kindly tell us in detail."

Sutaji says: "The great sage Sanatkumar, who was free from illusions, was the creation of Brahma’s imagination. He always remained engrossed in the worship of Brahma. Once, he was going towards the peaks of the mighty Meru Mountains (Himalayas) when on the way, he happened to sight the sacred Ganges. He was about to take a dip in the waters when Devarshi Narad also arrived there. Devarshi Narad greeted his elder brother and took bath in the river.

After carrying out usual rituals, they seated there and started a discussion about the virtues of Lord Vishnu." Devarshi Narad asked- "O brother! How can one realize the Lord Vishnu? Who is the cause of this whole creation? What is the appearance of devotion, knowledge and penance? Kindly elaborate the mystery of treating the guests also. Also tell me, how did Lord Vishnu effected the origin of Brahma and other gods?"

Sanatkumar says: In the beginning of creation, the self-illuminating Lord Vishnu created Brahma from His right hand side, Rudra from His central part and Vishnu, his own replica from His left hand side. As Lord Vishnu is omnipresent, similarly his illusions are also omnipresent and known with different names like Lakshmi, Uma, Shakti and Chandi. These are the powers of Lord Vishnu. Some people identify these powers with the illusions created by the Lord whereas the sages regard them as nature."

The gods, who protect the world, are Purush, and the Supreme Being, who is above these levels, is Lord. Nobody else is greater than He is. From His navel even Brahma has originated on a divine lotus. He is the Supreme Being the eternal joy incorporating all the three virtues.

O Narad! Five senses- sights, sound, scent, touch and taste have originated from the ego. Ego is the origin of other eleven senses also. These five senses in turn gave rise to five physical elements- ether, air, fire, water and earth. It was after the creation of these five physical elements that Brahma created the lower living beings. Then he created human beings followed by the creation of all the seven worlds and seven guards of these seven worlds. For the inhabitation of the living beings, Brahma also created great mountains, plains and seven seas.

Towards the north of the great saline sea and towards the south of the great Himalayas is situated the Holy Land of India. People who worship Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu inhabit this land. Because of their virtues, even the gods worship the people who populate the Indian landmass. Those ignorant people, who do not seek salvation despite having been born in India, have to suffer the tortures of hell as long as the Sun and the Moon shine in the sky. The whole world from Brahma to a seemingly unimportant blade of grass is the manifestation of Vasudev (Lord Vishnu).

18.3 Profile of the Sage Markandeya

Sanatkumar says: O sage! Faith has the greatest significance. Achievement of everything and appeasement of Lord Vishnu depend upon the faith. Nothing is attainable without faith. Such as a human being faces inertia in the absence of life and is rendered motionless. Similarly, faith is like a spiritual light without which, religious actions of a man come to cease. Similarly, devotion is also known as the life of all the achievements. It is also the giver of four supreme goals of life like Dharma, Arth, Kama and Moksha. No action succeeds without the input of devotion and faith. Even the menial jobs done with faith gives everlasting results. On the contrary, even the pious actions of envious people go futile. Attainment of God by envious people is impossible.

Envy is the greatest enemy of the human being. It creates a gap as big as the one that separates the sky from the nether world. O Brahmanandan! Only those people, who remain engrossed in faithful devotion of God, attain to the abode of Vishnu. Fallen are those who, despite having the knowledge of Vedas, do not comply with the moral code of conduct of their clan. Neither Vedas nor even devotion can salve such people. In other words, moral conduct is everything. O great sage! Devotion is like mother who is the base of life for every living being.

O Narad! Company of the pious people and the saints is the best means to cherish devotion. Saints are the teachers of the entire world. When the sins that have been accumulating all throughout the previous births decay only when one gets pious company and those who once get pious company experiences eternal joy.

Narad says: "O great devotee of Lord Vishnu! Kindly relate the actions and appearance of the Lord's devotees to me."

Sanatkumar says: "During the period of Pralay, when all the world was inundated, Lord Vishnu was sleeping on a Banyan leaf. That scene had amazed Markandeya, the supreme devotee of the Lord."

The sages asked: "When all the world was inundated, how did Markandeya escape? Sutaji kindly remove our doubt."

Sutaji says: "O great sages! Now, I am going to narrate the tale of Markandeya. Listen to it carefully."

Once upon a time, there lived a fortunate sage in the pious land of India. The sage was famous as Mrikandu. He had observed a very severe penance at the holy pilgrimage center of Shaligram. His penance began to cause worry for Indra. So, accompanied by other gods, Indra reached to Lord Vishnu who was resting on Sheshnaag in Ksheersagar, the ocean of milk. The gods prayed the Lord to protect them from the radiance of Mrikandu. Listening to the prayers offered by the gods, Lord Vishnu appeared in His four-armed form holding conch, wheel, mace and lotus in each of those arms. His radiance was enough to beat the shine of crore Suns. His radiance caused tremendous joy for the gods who fell flat at the feet of the Lord.

Lord says: "O gods! Get up. I am fully aware about your miseries. But your worries are meaningless because Maharshi Mrikandu is really a gentleman. He is not going to harm you in any way. Even if the situation arises, I am always ready to protect you." Saying these words, the Lord disappeared. Thus, assured by the Lord’s words, the gods also returned to their abode. On the other hand, pleased by Mrikandu’s penance, Lord appeared before him. As soon as Mrikandu opened his eyes, he saw Lord Vishnu standing before him. Lord’s four-armed, blue and radiant appearance caused great exhilaration for Mrikandu. He fell flat at His feet and prayed Him with tearful eyes. Pleased with his prayers, Lord asked Mrikandu to seek a boon. But Mrikandu refused saying that he had attained salvation just by having His sight. Still, Lord said that His appearance never goes in vain," So, I will be your son who will live a long life." Granting this boon, the Lord disappeared."

18.4Tale of the Sage Markandeya

Narad says: "O great sage! Why did Lord Vishnu appear as the son of Mrikandu? What did He do as his son? The Puranas say that during the Pralay, Markandeya had witnessed the direct appearance of Lord Vishnu’s illusion. Kindly narrate these things in detail."

Sanatkumar says: "Listen O Devarshi! After observing severe penance, the sage Mrikandu got married and received an equally virtuous and chaste wife. In the tenth month after their marriage, his wife gave birth to an extremely beautiful baby. The baby in fact had incorporated the radiance of the Lord. Mrikandu carried out all the necessary rituals and consecrations of the baby happily. In his fifth year, he carried out the thread ceremony of his son and started to educate him in Vedas. His education developed all the pious virtues in his son whom he

had named Markandeya. After finishing his education, sage Markandeya also started a severe penance to please Lord Vishnu.

Pleased by his penance, Lord Vishnu blessed him with a boon of creating Purana Samhita. This is the reason why the sage Markandeya is also known as Narayan. O Brahmins! Lord Vishnu did not annihilate Markandeya during the Pralay only to show him His illusions. It was due to this grace that Markandeya survived the Pralay and passed that time floating on a Banyan leaf. As long as the Lord slept, Markandeya kept floating on that leaf. As long as the night of the Lord lasted, Markandeya stayed on that flimsy leaf. At the end of the night, when the inundating Pralay receded and the Lord awakened from His prolonged sleep, He began the work of creation again. It was even more amazing for Markandeya to see the inundating water recede and new creation taking place. He began to pray the Lord with folded hands. Pleased by his prayers, the Lord said that He always protected His devotees even during the most severe crises. Markandeya then asked about the appearance of the true devotees of the Lord. He also expressed his curiosity to know the reasons of their birth.

Lord Vishnu says: "O great among the sages! The greatest devotees are those who do not harm others with their mind, words and actions and who are free from envy. Those who have impartial view are best among the devotees. Those who protect the human beings, cows, Brahmins, vegetation and remain engrossed in discussion of Lord's virtues. Those who salute the garden of basil and put the earth from basil's roots on their heads, those who are beloved to Lord Shiva, put Tripund on their forehead and worship Him performing Yagyas facing south. Those who always donate water and cereals, cows and daughters are the excellent among all the devotees. O great sage! These are some of the characteristics of a true devotee. Cherish these characteristics and you will also attain salvation in the last." Thus, preaching, Lord Vishnu disappeared. Markandeya thereafter led a pious life and observed penance and in the last he too attained to the supreme abode of the Lord.

18.5The Greatness of the Ganges

Sutaji says- "The glorious description of devotion for Lord Vishnu caused extreme joy for Narad."

Narad says: "O great sage Sanat! Now kindly tell me about such a place of pilgrimage which is even holier than the holiest places of pilgrimage."

Sanatkumar says: O Narad! Confluence of Ganga and Yamuna is the holier than any other place of pilgrimage. The extremely sacred and pious Ganga rises from the feet of none other than Lord Vishnu. Yamuna on the other hand is the daughter of Surya. Even the remembrance of Ganga is enough to do away with all the sins and making one peaceful.

This place where Ganga and Yamuna merge is famous as Prayaag in the world. It is the same place where Brahma had once invoked Lord Vishnu in a Yagya.

Since then, innumerable sages have followed Brahma and performed different kinds of Yagyas there. Even a person who recites the name of Ganga hundred miles from Prayaag attains salvation. Smear the sand of Ganga's bank on the forehead is like, in a way, bearing the crescent shaped Moon on the head. Those who remember Ganga receive the benefit of performing pilgrimage to all the holy places. Among other places of pilgrimage, Varanasi has almost equal significance to that of Prayaag. O Brahmin! Ganga is the mother of the entire world. Mere touch of her sacred waters salved the sixty thousand sons of Sagar. No one can describe the greatness of Ganga

18.6Fate of King Baahu

Narad says: "O great sage who in the dynasty of Sagar received salvation from Preta Bhava. Who was Sagar? Kindly narrate his whole story to me."

Sanatkumar says: "Long ago, there occurred a king named Baahu in the dynasty of Surya. He was very religious in nature and looked after his subjects like his own offspring. Everyone was happy in his kingdom, which he ruled with polity and justice".

But destiny was playing another game for the king. With time, evils like envy and ego began to rise in the mind of Baahu. He began to think that nobody else was as religious as he was. These evils in turn caused the king to incline towards sensual pleasures. O Narad! An unconscious mind is the greatest cause of destruction. Everyone, even the better half begin to nurture hostility against such a person. So, the same thing happened with the king Baahu. Many neighbouring kings together launched a massive attack on the kingdom of Baahu and defeated him after a month-long fierce battle.

After his defeat, the king Baahu left his kingdom and began to wander along with his queens. At last, he came to stay beside a big lake. Even the local inhabitants and lower creatures hid seeing the king approach. His subjects too had lost their sympathies for him.

Now the life of the king was not more than the death. So, repenting his condition, king Baahu met his death in the presence of the sage Aurv. At that time, his youngest queen was expecting an issue. After her husband's death, she decided to commit Sati. But, the sage Aurv prevented her convincing that her would be son would enjoy more popularity than his father had. Besides, nothing is more wretched than killing an unborn baby. Thus, convincing the queen with all means, sage Aurv guided the queens to perform cremation of her husband and other rituals. Since then, both the queens began to live in the hermitage of sage Aurv.

18.7The Birth of Sagar

Sanatkumar says :- "O Narad! Both the queens were passing their time in the hermitage of sage Aurv. When half of the rainy season had passed, the elder

queen began to cultivate evil feelings for the younger. She, therefore, made deceitfully the younger queen to consume poison. But the poison could not affect the queen and her unborn baby because of the virtues she had acquired serving the sage Aurv. After three months, the younger queen gave birth to a son. Sage Aurv carried out necessary rituals and consecrations of the child and named him Sagar because he was born with the effect of poison."

Sagar began to grow in Aurv's hermitage. The sage had started to train the boy in weaponry. One day, out of curiosity, Sagar asked his mother about his father. His mother related to him all the events that took place with his father king Baahu, her husband. Listening to the fate of his father, Sagar took an oath to destroy all those who had caused misery to his father. Circumambulating his teacher Aurv and taking his mother's permission, Sagar at once set out on his mission. His first halt was at the hermitage of sage Vashishta.

Sagar narrated the whole thing to the sage Vashishta. Sage Vashishta presented him with a number of divine weapons and saw him off blessing him with a boon for victory. Armed with many divine weapons and the blessings of his mother and teachers, Sagar defeated even the most powerful enemies of his father in no time and established his rule over the entire earth. The defeated kings took asylum in the hermitage of sage Vashishta who assured them to be fearless. Spies on the other hand informed Sagar about this development. Sagar at once set out to the hermitage of Vashishta with an intention of exterminating those kings but meanwhile, sage Vashishta had got all the kings shaven. So, assuming that his enemies were dead, Sagar mockingly said to sage Vashishta: "O sage! Why are you guarding these characterless creatures? I will not spare their lives."

Vashishta says: "O son! You are great. Now listen to me carefully for your benefit. I have already killed your enemies, so you will not gain anything killing them again. O king! This physical body is the root of all the sins. You will not receive popularity killing the physical body. So, give this matter a little thought before killing them." The words of sage Vashishta soothed Sagar's anger. Thereafter, sage Vashishta carried out the coronation of Sagar.

The king Sagar had two wives, Keshini and Sumati. They both were the daughters of Vidharba's king Kashyap. When sage Aurv heard about Sagar's coronation, he visited his palace and returned after preaching him. Some months later, with a desire of having sons, both the queens secretly summoned sage Aurv once again and received the talisman for having sons. Meditating for a while, the sage Aurv said: "O fortunate ones! One of you will receive a son who will continue his progeny in future and the other will have sixty thousand prowessive sons."

The sage also advised them to seek the boon of their respective choices. With time, Keshini gave birth to one son Asmanjas who grew in a whimsical person. Sumati gave birth to sixty thousand sons who were very obedient initially but

following Asmanjas, they too began to behave whimsically. Asmanjas had one son, Anshuman who was very obedient to his grandfather. Sixty thousand sons of Sagar soon began to torment all the three worlds. Perplexed by their atrocities, Indra appealed to the sage Kapil to get them rid of their woes. With the inspiration of Sage Kapil, Sagar organized an Ashwamedha Yagya. Indra kidnapped the horse of the Yagya and tethered at the hermitage of sage Kapil. When all the sixty thousand princes reached Kapil's hermitage, they began to abuse him seeing the horse there. Infuriated Kapil at once incinerated them with his curse. King Sagar then sent Anshuman in search of his sixty thousand sons and recovered the horse. Sage Kapil assured Anshuman that his grandson Bhagirath would please Ganga to descend and salve his ancestors.

18.8Salvation of Saudas

Narad says: "O great brother! Why did sage Vashishta curse Saudas and how did he recover from this curse by the virtue of the Ganges waters?" Sanatkumar says: "O Narad! Saudas was a virtuous king. He ruled over his subjects religiously. He was very fond of hunting. So, one day, he went on hunting in the forest. He continued his excursion all day long. Towards evening, he reached at the bank of Godavari and decided to pass the night there. In the next morning also, he began his hunting excursion one again. During the hunting, he spotted a deer and began to chase it. Chasing the deer, he reached the core of the forest.

There, the king saw a pair of tigers copulating. Saudas was an expert archer. He trained an arrow and killed the tigress in just one shot. As soon as the tigress died, she assumed the form of an enormous ogress. Death of his partner infuriated the tiger, which was in fact a monster in disguise. He decided to avenge the death of his mate. On the other hand, the whole event frightened the king. He held a hasty parley with his ministers. They unanimously took a decision to give up the hunting forever.

Long afterwards, king Saudas organized an Ashwamedha Yagya in the auspices of sage Vashishta. At the completion of Yagya, sage Vashishta went to take a bath before taking his meal. Meanwhile, the monster appeared there in the guise of Vashishta and expressed his desire to eat meat. Then, in the guise of the cook, the monster cooked human flesh and served it in golden bowls. When sage Vashishta arrived, Saudas offered him the dishes made of human flesh. For a while, Vashishta thought in amazement but soon he realized the whole thing. Indignantly, he cursed the king to become a man-eating demon.

The king tried to assert his ignorance and said- "You yourself had expressed your desire to eat the meat." With his divine sight, sage Vashishta learnt that the king had been tricked with. By then, the king himself got ready to curse the sage in retaliation. But his prudent wife Madayanti stopped him. Thus, convinced by the queen, the anger of Saudas subsided. But he had taken water in his palm, so the problem arose where to dispose it off for it was sure to burn

anything it fell upon. After a little consideration, the king dropped that water right on his feet that burnt immediately. Since then, the king Saudas came to be known as Kalmaashpaad. Sage Vashishta then consoled him.Vashishta says: "O king! Imprudence is the root of all the obstacles and crises. But O king! You have no reason to be sorry. Your miseries will end soon and you will regain your original radiance by the virtue of the Ganges' waters." Saying this, sage Vashishta returned to his hermitage.

The whole body of the king had turned black. Since then, he began to roam in the forests like a wild animal. There he ate whatever he found-animals, birds and even human beings. Within six months, he devoured all the animals in one hundred Yojan expanses of the forests. Then he migrated to another area in the forest. One day, in the guise of a monster, Saudas was wandering in a forest on the bank of Narmada. There he spotted a sage couple engaged in carnal conjugation. Saudas at once got hold of the sage and began to devour him.

The sage's wife pleaded him to release her husband but Saudas did not pay heed to her pleas and devoured the sage. In anguish and anger, the Brahmini cursed Saudas that he would die if he tried to copulate with a woman and that he would always remain a monster. Infuriated, Saudas cursed her in retaliation: "O evil one! Just one curse was sufficient. Why did you pour down two curses on me? Go and become a devil." The Brahmini at once turned into a devil. Afterwards, both of them began to wander in the forest. One day, they reached to such part of the forest where another monster was living. That monster too had acquired the formidable appearance because of not obeying his teacher. Seeing them, the monster enquired about the reasons of their coming to that forest. They narrated the whole thing to him.

Saudas says: "O friend! Who are you? Tell me, what sins did you committed. Do not conceal anything from your friends."

The monster says: "Before acquiring this appearance, I was a Brahmin and well versed in all the Vedas. I lived in Magadh. One day, blinded by my knowledge and youth, I insulted my teacher. That is the reason of my acquiring this monster's appearance. Since then, I have been eating flesh only and I do not know how many Brahmins I have devoured so far. Still, my hunger is insatiated. O fortunate one! Hence I advise each and everyone never to insult their teachers."

Saudas says: "What is a teacher? Who was your teacher?"

The monster says: O brother! There are many kinds of teachers but I am telling about the most revered ones. All including the teachers of Vedas, preachers of scriptures and mantras, remover of doubts, protectors, wife's father, elder brother, mother's brother, family priest and own mother and father fall in the category of teachers.



I had received preaching about all the religions from sage Gautam while staying on the enchanting banks of the Ganges. Once, when I went to worship Shiva, I did not greet him. Sage Gautam did not mind my behavior but Lord Shiva turned me into a monster out of anger."

That sort of pious discussion among the monsters attenuated their sins. In the meantime, a Brahmin, who had hailed from Kalinga (Orrisa), arrived there carrying the holy water of Ganges. The monsters requested the Brahmin to sprinkle some of the waters over them. They also narrated the greatness of Ganges before the Brahmin. Pleased with their willingness, and appraisal of Ganges, the Brahmin sprinkled some Ganges water on them. The monster and the ogress resumed their divine appearance but Saudas remained unchanged. His worries began to mount but the invisible Saraswati consoled and advised him to recite the Lord's name. Saudas then migrated to Varanasi where he continuously recited the Lord's name and took bath in the holy Ganges. Thus, he overcame the curse of Brahmini and returned to his kingdom. There, sage Vashishta once again carried out his coronation. Since then, Saudas ruled his kingdom through religious means and attained the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu.

18.9 King Bali defeats the Gods

Narad says: "O brother! Kindly narrate the tale of the Ganges' origin from the feet of lord Vishnu."

Sanatkumar says: Long ago, in the beginning of creation, one sage Kashyap had two wives Diti and Aditi. They both were the daughters of Daksha. Aditi was the mother of the gods while Diti had given birth to demons. Thus, the demons and the gods were stepbrothers and fought accordingly for the power and prestige. Demons were elder. Hiranyakashyap, the demon king was the son of Diti. His son Prahlad was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. In the lineage of Prahlad, occurred the great king Bali who was the son of Virochan.

Bali had conquered entire earth and was now eyeing the heaven. Bali had two ministers, Kubhand and Koopkarna and an equally prowessive son Baan. With a huge army, Bali launched a massive attack on heaven and soon a fierce battle broke out. The battle lasted for one thousand years. At last, the gods lost the heaven to the demons and began to wander here and there in search of solace. Defeating the gods, the king Bali organized many Ashwamedha Yagyas. Feeling sorry for the plight of her sons, Aditi began a severe penance on the Himalayas.

18.10 Origin of the Ganges

Narad says: "O brother! You narrated a wonderful tale. Now, kindly relate to me, how did the Ganges originate?"

Sanatkumar says: O Narad! Pleased with the severe penance of Aditi, Lord Vishnu appeared before her and asked her to seek a boon. Feeling elated with exhilaration, Aditi fell flat at the Lord's feet. She intimated the Lord about the plight of her sons and sought that He should help them to regain the heaven without killing the demons for they were also her sons though step. Pleased by her indiscrimination for her stepsons, Lord Vishnu assured Aditi that soon He would arrive as her son and salve the gods from their miseries. Then, the Lord presented Aditi with His garland and disappeared. In due course of time, Aditi gave birth to a son who was holding a conch, a wheel, a mace and a lotus in each of his four hands. The child was named as Vaaman. Even his father, sage Kashyap greeted him with respect.

By the time, when the thread ceremony was about to be carried out for Vaaman, king Bali organized a grand Ashwamedha Yagya in the auspices of his teacher Shukracharya. Lord Vishnu Himself had been invoked in the Yagya along with Lakshmi. Taking his parent's permission, Vaaman too arrived at the sight of the Yagya. With their divine sight, all the sages who were present there recognized Lord Vishnu and felt extreme joy and greeted Him with respect. Even Shukracharya understood the motive of Vaaman's coming there. He cautioned Bali in isolation not to grant any demand of Vaaman. He also advised Bali to abide by his dictate or he would have to face severe consequences.

But illumined by the destiny, king Bali did not pay heed to Shukracharya's advice and welcomed Vaaman warmly and asked him to seek anything he wished. Vaaman said: "O king! If you want to give me something, kindly grant me three steps of land so that I may carry out my Yagyas smoothly. King Bali tried to dissuade Vaaman with temptations of heavenly comforts and other luxuries. But Vaaman stayed to his demand that he needed nothing else but three steps of land for carrying out Yagyas. At last Bali agreed to grant his demand. He requested Vaaman to pour some water from the Kamandalu on his palm so that he could take a vow. As the last attempt to prevent Bali from making a vow, Shukracharya assumed a miniature appearance and clogged the snout of the kamandalu. The omniscient Lord pricked the snout with a sharp stem and pricked Shukracharya's one eye.

Thereafter, taking some water on his palm, king Bali proceeded to grant Vaaman three steps of land. As soon as Bali granted the demand, Vaaman assumed a gigantic appearance and measured the entire earth and heaven in his two steps. While Lord Vishnu was measuring the universe, it broke into two pieces with the impact of His toe. With the tearing of the universe, millions of streams sprang out. In the course of their flow, these streams merged into a single mightier stream and, sanctifying Brahma and other deities, fell on the mighty Sumeru Mountain (Himalayas). As there was no other room left for the Lord to put His third step, Bali presented his own head for the purpose. Vaaman put his third step on Bali's head and pressed him down into the hades.

Narad says: "O great sage! How did the Lord arrange for Bali's food in the nether world?"

Sanatkumar says: "Oblations offered without hymns and alms given to undeserving person constitute the food for Bali. Thus, the Lord snatched the kingdom of heaven from Bali without any bloodshed and returned it to the gods."

18.11 Definition of Dharma

Narad says:"O great sage! I have just heard the tale of sacred Ganges. Now kindly describe about the people who deserve to take donations."

Sanatkumar says: O Narad! Brahmin is considered as the excellent among all the four castes. Hence, to make the donation fruitful, one should donate to the Brahmins only. A Brahmin can accept donation candidly but not a Vaishya or a Kshatriya. Even among Brahmins, there are many categories who do not deserve to accept donation.

These are- Brahmins who practice astrology, act against the religion, who are greedy, who sell scriptures and other religious materials, who have relations with other women than their wives, who are envious, ungrateful, singer, who have characterless wife, who are soldiers, priests, harbinger, cook, poet, doctor, who eat meat and cereals given by a Shudra, who carry out cremation and the Brahmins who consume the food given by prostitutes. Donation given to all these types of Brahmins go futile. Besides these, Brahmins who habitually enjoy sensual pleasures during siesta, who dine during the dusk, who have been boycotted by their brothers and society, who have taken birth illegitimately or after the death of their real father because of dubious relations of their mother, whose younger brother have married earlier and those who are always controlled by lusty women, who act as pimps or remain indulged in mean activities also do not deserve donation.

Donation, spending to meet necessities and wasting in useless activities are the three fates of wealth. A donation made selflessly to a deserving person on a request is excellent among all kinds of donations. A donation made with some desire is mediocre while donation given as sacrifice is of the lowest category.

Sanatkumar then narrated the tale of Bhagirath and Dharmaraaj.

Once, Dharmaraaj visited the kingdom of king Sagar. Dharmaraaj praised Sagar overtly. With folded hands, king Sagar requested Dharmaraaj to preach him about religion and non-religion and tell him something about divine worlds and hell. Dharmaraaj says:"O king! Providing a Brahmin family or a Vedapathi Brahmin with a means of sustenance is the most virtuous donation. Inspiring others to make donation to such a Brahmin is also equally fruitful. Apart from these, digging out reservoirs and maintaining them and inspiring others to do

the same thing also bears unending fruits." To corroborate his point, Dharmaraaj narrated the tale of king Veerbhadrak and his minister Buddhiraaj.

18.12 Description of Religious Action

Dharmaraaj says: "O king! Those who build temples with earth stay in the abode of Vishnu for three kalpas. Then they attain Brahmaloka. One receives double virtues if he builds a temple with wood. Building a temple with bricks and stones gives four-fold virtue while with the precious stones one gets ten-fold virtues. Building of temple with copper and gold gives hundred fold and crore fold virtues. Those who preserve temples and reservoirs receive hundred times more virtues than the builders do. Virtues of a rich man donating whole estate and a poor person donating a yard of land are equal."

"O virtuous one! Those who develop gardens and parks also receive same virtues. Those who preserve them receive more virtues than the developers. One who plants a basil sapling salves his crores of ancestors. Similarly, those who bathe the Lord's idol with milk on Dwadashi and Poornamaasi salve millions of their ancestors. Those who bathe Lord's idol with Panchamrit on Ekadashi receive everlasting joy and salvation. Similarly, those who bathe Lord's idol with coconut milk, sugarcane juice, and water containing flowers or filtered water get free from all their sins. Similarly, those who bathe Lord Vishnu's idol during eclipses or on auspicious dates and conjugations receive the virtue of all the Yagyas. Those who bathe Lord Vishnu's and Shiva's idols with coconut milk, ghee, honey and sesame oil on auspicious dates assume respective appearances of these gods."

"Those who worship Lord Vishnu and Shiva offering them flowers of lotus, Pandanus, and particularly offer Dhatura to Lord Shiva attain their respective abodes. Similarly, donation of Guggul (scented raisin), lamp, water and cereal bears inexhaustible fruits. Virtues of donating land and milch cow to a Brahmin cannot be described in words. It is the case with the donation of knowledge, Shaligram, Shivalinga, horse, buffalo, elephant or any other vehicle. Those who arrange for the cremation of an orphaned Brahmin receive virtues equal to thousands of Ashwamedha Yagyas. Those who serve the Brahmin deities or cow, those who play instruments, bell, and blow conch or clap in the temple enjoy intimacy with divine beauties in the heaven for five Kalpas. Blowing of conch helps one attain the abode of Vishnu. Even the remembrance of Lord Vishnu's name does away with the imminent crises."

18.13 Expiation for the Sins

Dharmaraaj says: "O king! I am now going to narrate about the religion. Listen to it faithfully. If a person touches or gets touched by an impure or irreligious thing, he should observe fast for three days and six nights for expiation. He should take bath thrice a day. If a Brahmin defecates during dining, he must give up his food at once and take water only. Then he should observe a fast for a day and night and close it taking Panchgavya only to get pure again. If a

person dines immediately after urination, or urinates during dining, he must observe a day and night long fast and close it with Havan. Those women who do not serve their husbands should be expelled from the home for a period of twelve years and should not be helped in any way during the exile. Impurity resulted because of touching a woman in menses takes fast for three nights to get purified."

Dead body of a person who had committed suicide should be smeared with sandalwood paste or any other holy material. If a person escapes an attempt to suicide, a fine of two hundred rupees should be imposed on him.

Those who deliberately eat cereals of washers, skinners and other downtrodden classes and tribes or have illicit contacts with their women are required to observe Chandrayan fast in order to get pure. For those who establish abhorrent connection with their mother, sister or daughter, self-immolation is the only way to expiate. Those who mate with their teacher's wife formal observance of fast is required. If someone has killed a pregnant cow, he must expiate for it observing Chandrayan fast separately for each of the animals.

One should not use the soil collected from pond's bottom, termite's mound, mouse burrow, barren land, road, cremation ground and ground used for defecation purpose. Use of Panchgavya washes even the most severe sin. If a second death occurs in the family while the purification period of first death is still on; separate purification is not required. Ill effect of an abortion lasts for three days. After marriage, a woman adopts her husband's name. Hence, oblation for a married woman must be offered by her son or someone belonging to her husband's clan. Ashes must be collected on the first, second, third or fourth day after the cremation. One must offer watery oblations to his dead ancestors standing in navel-deep water facing south.

18.14 Torture in the Hell

Dharmaraaj says: "O king! Those who commit severe sin on earth are bound to suffer equally severe torturing in hell. I am now describing about such sins and the tortures vouchsafed for them in the hells. Tapan, Balukaakumbh, Maharaurav, Raurav, Kumbhipaak, Pramardan, Lalabhaksha, Vasaakup and Vaitarni are some of the prominent hells. Drinking of urine in a ditch full of feces, eating of canine flesh, eating of worms, drinking of semen, sleeping on cinders, stinging by snakes, boring through bones, drinking of bile, biting by ants, breaking of teeth, tethering to hot iron etc. are some of the tortures one has to face for his sins in the hell. Those who criticize Brahmins and dictate them or kill them, drinker, those who steal gold, have illicit contact with the wife of their teacher and even those who accompany such people are condemned as great sinners. All of them deserve a place in the hell."

Stealing of items like copper, iron, water, musk, betelnut, sandalwood etc. is also like the crime of stealing gold. Illicit contact with sister and daughter-in-law and forceful copulation with a woman in menses are also like having illicit

contact with the wife of the teacher. Our great sages have given dictates for the expiation of such sins. Those who live in Buddhist monasteries or frequently visit there live in the hells for crores of years. Sinners pass initial phase of their expiation in the hells. For the seven births then, they take incarnation as asses. Then for the next six births, they appear as snake, diseased people, dog, deer, tree and monitor. O king! Those who long for and have illicit contacts with women other than wife are forced to copulate with a pretty but extremely hot copper mannequin and then thrown into the hells. Those women who prefer to sleep with men other than husband are forced to embrace hot iron statue on a blazing bed. Then they are forced to embrace a hot iron pillar, take bath in saline water, and drink it. They have to suffer these tortures for thousand years.

Those who listen to other's criticism with interest have to bear lot of suffering. Hot nails are hammered into their ears. The pores thus formed are filled with boiling oil. They are then thrown into Kumbhipaak hell.

Those who abuse Lord Vishnu and Shiva are fed with salt only for crores of years then they are thrown into Raurav hell, which is full of hot scorching sand. Traitors and greedy of other's cereals have to eat their own flesh. Those who eat astrologer's and priest's cereals are kept in different hells for crores of years followed by their keeping in the wells of boiling oil and saline water where they are fed with feces only. At the completion of their punishment, such people appear as Malechchha on earth. Those who torment others are thrown into Vaitarni. Those who do not perform Panchmaha Yagya or worship deities are kept in Lalabhaksha and Raurav hells respectively.

Those who do not act as per the scriptures are thrown into the hells for thousand crores of Kalpas. Those who throw excretion from their bodies or leave parts like hair, tooth, bone, nails etc. in the temple commit sins equal to killing an unborn baby. They are subjected to severe tortures in the hells before being sent into abhorrent incarnations. Those who give false witness undergo sufferings in the hells till the rules of fourteen Indras. Those who do not curb immoral traffic despite being capable go to hell. Those who falsely blame gentlepeople have to live in the hell for crores of years. Those who give up a fast before stipulated period go to the hell named Asipatra. There is no penance for the ones who adopt partial view during justice or religious education. Those who consume cow's flesh live in Vingbhojya hell for thousands of years. Those who torture Brahmins through their thoughts, actions and words always fall in the hell. Those who destroy gardens have to suffer all the above mentioned hells.

O king!" One must repent for his sins before Lord Vishnu. Sight of the Ganges and basil, singing of devotional songs, magnanimity and non-violence attenuate the effect of the sin. No action bears fruit if not offered to Lord Vishnu. Devotion to Lord Vishnu is the excellent way to repent for the sins. Abidance to morality is the best way to train the religion. Religion without morality is equally painful. O king! Now I have related all about religion. Since now onwards, cultivate

devotion for Lord Vishnu and invoke the Ganges to descend on earth in order to salve your sinister ancestors. Only the Ganges is capable of salving one and all."

Sanatkumar says: "O Narad! Thus preaching the king Sagar, Dharmaraaj disappeared from the sight. It was due to the severe penance of king Bhagirath that the Ganges descended on the earth and salved the sixty thousand deceased sons of Sagar."

18.15 Descent of Ganges and Salvation of Sagar's Sons

Narad says:"O Muni! What did king Bhagirath do on Himalayas? How did he please Ganges to descend on the earth?"

Sanatkumar says: O Narad! Renouncing all his royal comforts, Bhagirath went to the snow-capped, lofty peaks of the Himalayas. There he saw dense forest and herds of deer and elephants playing. Even his hermitage was full of sweet chattering of the birds. Reciting of Vedas and other scriptures was reverberating all around. Bhagirath came face to face with the sage Bhrigu who was surrounded by his disciples. Bhagirath approached and respectfully greeted the sage Bhrigu.

Bhagirath says: "O omniscient sage! Kindly grace me with the knowledge of the path that leads even the most mournful souls to salvation."

Bhrigu says: "O king! I know that you have arrived here with a beautiful motive of salving your ancestors. Hence, you are like Shri Hari yourself. Now, I describe about the actions, which please Shri Hari. O king, be non-violent, altruistic, virtuous, speak truth and seek pious company to be a devotee of Lord Vishnu. Recite the following mantras-

AUM NAMO BHAGWATE VAASUDEVAAY NAMAH |
AUM NAMO VAASUDEVAAY

You will definitely attain peace of mind."

Bhagirath says: "O sage! What is truth? What is in the interest of all the living beings? Who are evil ones? Who are ascetics? What are virtuous actions? How should one remember and worship Lord Vishnu? What is peace? O great sage! Kindly describe about these things."

Bhrigu says: "O knowledgeous one! All such actions, which do not harm any living being, are non-violence. Actions, which aid in moral conduct and pacify the people, are in the interest of the public. All the people who are envious and oppose the religion and the scriptures are evil ones. Those who tread the path shown by religion and scriptures and always engage in the benefit of people are ascetics in the true sense. All the actions, which lead to devotion for Lord Vishnu and cause extreme joy for all are virtuous. Lord Vishnu incorporates all the other

deities. Having such thoughts like ‘I will worship Him with correct methods’ is devotion. Seeing Lord Vishnu in each living and non-living things is impartial view. To be in peace and harmony in all circumstances with each and everyone is peace. O king! I have described now all the things to you. Go now and begin your penance. May it all be well for you."

Thus, with the permission and blessing of sage Bhrigu, king Bhagirath started his penance. He continued his penance for sixty thousand years at length in an enchanting place Naandeshwar in Himalayas. Seeing his severe penance, and perplexed by its radiance, all the gods appeared before Lord Vishnu in Ksheersagar.

The gods say: "O remover of sorrows! O controller of all the three worlds! We all greet you."

Pleased by the prayers, Lord Vishnu instinctively learnt about the motive of the gods. He assured them to be fearless and Himself appeared before Bhagirath. Bhagirath felt hilarious and greeted Shri Hari.

Lord Vishnu says: "Your desires shall be fulfilled. Your ancestors shall attain to my abode. But now go and pray Lord Shiva with your full capacity. He will definitely benefit you." Saying this, Lord Vishnu disappeared. The king stood there for some time wondering whether it was all a dream when an invisible voice announced, ‘it was not a dream O king! It is reality. Do as Lord Vishnu has said.’

King Bhagirath began even more severe penance to please Lord Shiva. After a prolonged penance, Lord Shiva appeared there. Bhagirath fell flat at His feet. Pleased by his devotion and prayers, Lord Shiva blessed Bhagirath that He would hand over the Ganges to him for the salvation of his ancestors. As soon as Lord Shiva uttered these words, the Ganges emerged from His tussocks and followed Bhagirath wherever he walked.

Thus, following Bhagirath, the Ganges reached Gangasagar at the hermitage of sage Kapil where the ashes of Bhagirath’s ancestors were lying unattended. As soon as the holy waters of the Ganges touched the ashes, Bhagirath’s ancestors got freed from the noose of Yama and ascended to their heavenly abode. Since then, the Ganges is also known as Bhagirathi.

18.16 Description of Dwadashi Fast

The sages say: "O fortunate one! You have obliged us narrating the tale of sacred Ganges. Now we desire to hear what Narad asked Sanatkumar."

Sutaji says: "O great sages! Now I narrate what Narad asked Sanatkumar, listen to it carefully."

Narad says: "I am blessed hearing the pious tale of the Ganges. Now kindly tell me about the fast and rituals performing which, Shri Hari could be pleased."

Sanatkumar says: O Narad! May God bless you! You are the supreme devotee of Lord Vishnu. That's why, you are asking about these rituals. Now I am telling you about these rituals and fasts, which make a man fearless. O Narad! There is a special provision for worshipping Lord Vishnu on the twelfth day of Shukla Paksha (brighter phase) in the month of Maargashirsh. This worship could be performed wearing white or yellow clothes. During the worship, one should recite the mantra –

KESHAVAAYA NAMASTUBHYAM.

One should then offer oblations of ghee and sesame seeds in sacred fire. During the night, one should sing devotional songs before Shaligram and remain awakened. Then the idol of Vishnu should be bathed with five liters of milk. Similarly, Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Vishnu should be worshipped with Naivedya and edible items three times. Next morning, similar worship should be repeated.

At the end of the worship, one should donate sweetmeats made of milk, ghee and coconut to Brahmin while reciting-'May the Lord materialize all my wishes.' Seeing off the Brahmin, one should break his fast at the end.

On the same day, in the month of Pausha, one should observe a fast and worship Lord Vishnu's idol bathing it with milk while reciting

NAMO NARAYANA.

In this worship also, there is provision of nightlong prayers and vigilance. Donating the Brahmins with rice, pulses, ghee etc., one should respectfully feed them and break his fast in the last. Donation of Dakshina is a must. Similarly, on the same day in the month of Maagh, there is a provision of daylong fast and worship. This time, five kilos of sesame seeds are donated to the Brahmins.

On the twelfth day of Shukla Paksha in Phagun, one should bathe Shri Hari's idol with five liters of milk. Then one hundred and eight oblations of sesame seeds and ghee are made to the sacred fire. Nightlong prayers, feeding of Brahmins etc. are as usual. In this worship, unhusked rice is donated. The required mantra is

GOVINDAAY NAMASTUBHYAM

On the same day in the month of Chaitra, there is a provision of bathing Vishnu's idol with five liters of ghee and making oblations of honey, ghee and sesame seeds one hundred and eight times while reciting -

NAMOSTU VISHNAVE TUBHYAM

Then four kilos of rice are donated to a Brahmin.

On the twelfth day in the brighter phase of Vaishaakh, there is a provision of bathing Vishnu's idol with milk and making one hundred and eight oblations of ghee reciting -

NAMASTE MADHUHANTE

On the twelfth day in the brighter phase of Jyeshtha, there is a provision of offering one hundred and eight oblations of kheer (rice cooked in four liters of milk) while reciting

NAMAH TRIVIKRAMAAY.

Twenty Maalpuas (wheat flour kneaded in milk and sugar and fried in ghee) are donated to a Brahmin.

On the same day in the month of Ashaadh, Lord Vishnu's idol is bathed with four liters of milk. Then oblations of ghee are made and cereal mixed with coconut and curd are donated to the Brahmins. This worship is directed to Vaaman incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Hence, mantra

NAMASTE VAAMANAAY is recited all along the rituals.

In the month of Shraavan, there is a provision of bathing Lord's idol with milk and honey on the twelfth day of the brighter phase. Then one hundred and eight oblations are made reciting –

SHRIDHARAAY NAMOSTUTE.

Then four liters of milk, clothes and two golden earrings are donated to the Brahmin.

Lord's idol should be bathed with milk while reciting -

HRISHIKESH NAMOSTUBHYAM on the twelfth day in the month of Bhaadrapad.

Then one hundred and eight oblations are made with cooked cereals mixed with honey. Wheat donated along with gold to the Brahmins besides feeding them with respect.

In the month of Ashwin also, Lord's idol is bathed with five liters of milk. Then, one hundred and eight oblations are offered with ghee, sesame seeds and rice reciting -

NAMASTE PADMANAABHAAY.

Two hundred and fifty grams of honey are donated to a Brahmin. In the month of Kartik, on the same day, Lord's idol is bathed with four liters of milk, curd or ghee while reciting-

NAMO DAAMODARAAY.

Then, one hundred and eight oblations are offered with sesame seeds mixed with honey and ghee. This worship is closed with donating five types of edible items to a deserving Brahmin, feeding him and seeing him off with Dakshina.

O Munivar! Those who observe this virtuous fast for the twelve months of a year attains to the supreme abode. Observance of this fast for one or two months only is also equally benefiting. If this fast is observed for a year, there is a provision of special closing ritual at the end so that one shouldn't have to observe it again in his life. This closing ritual is performed on the twelfth day of the darker phase in the month of Maargsheersh.

One should get up early in the morning that day and after attending routine tasks; he should take bath, wear white clothes, smear sandalwood paste on the forehead and make a square-shaped altar on the ground. This altar should be decorated with jingling bells, whiskers, flags and white cloth. On the four corners of the altar, four lamps should be lighted.

At the center of the altar, a Sarvatobhadra wheel is drawn and twelve urns filled with water are kept on it. Putting five kinds of gems in these urns, they should be covered with white cloth. The worshipper must procure silver or gold idols of Lakshmi and Lord Vishnu and place them on the lids of the urns. Frugality is not expected in this ritual. These idols should be bathed with milk containing ghee, honey, curd and five types of dry fruits. It should be followed with proper worship of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi. These rituals last nightlong.

Next morning, oblations are offered with sesame seeds reciting all the twelve mantras described above. Donation of ten Maalpuas, curd, kheer, ghee etc. are made to twelve Brahmins. At last, all the idols and other materials are handed over to the priest who had guided the worship. Devotee must dine after all and he should not speak during dining. All the desires of the one who observes all these twelve fasts and closes them properly are fulfilled and he attains abode of Vishnu along with his twenty-one generations.

18.17 Description of Fast for LakshmiNarayana

Sanatkumar says: " O great among the sages! Now I am narrating about an excellent fast, which destroys all the sins. Observing fast on full Moon day is considered excellent among all the fasts. It leads to fulfillment of all the desires and protects the devotee from influence of harsh planets. Like the fast of

Dwadashi, this fast is also begun from the month of Maargsheersh and observed continuously on every full Moon day of succeeding months till Kartik when it is closed with proper rituals".

To begin with, one should start worshipping Lord Vishnu since the morning of full Moon day in the month of Maargsheersh wearing white clothes and reciting

NAMO NAARAAYANAA.

After the worship, the devotee must perform a Havan on a square-shaped altar offering oblations with cooked cereals, sesame seeds, ghee etc. White flowers, unbroken rice grains and water are offered to the Lord. In the evening, the same things are offered to the rising full Moon also. A devotee must pass the night engaged in religious discussion, singing of devotional songs etc. Next day, donations are made to the Brahmins after performing usual worship. The same rituals are performed every month to observe the fast.

Rituals for closing this fast in the month of Kartik on full Moon day are also elaborate.

First of all, the devotee should build a rectangular canopy and decorate it with floral garlands, arches, lamps, cinnabar, mirrors, whiskers etc. At the center of the canopy, on the ground, Sarvatobhadra wheel should be drawn with five pillars. Then one to twelve urns are kept on this wheel and on these urns, silver or golden idols of Lord Vishnu are placed. These idols are bathed with milk containing curd, ghee, honey and five types of dry fruits. Then a proper elaborate worship is carried out for these idols. Night is passed singing devotional songs. Next morning, after proper worship, these idols are donated to the presiding priest. It is followed by feeding of Brahmins. All these rituals are closed with performing a Havan offering sesame seeds as oblation. Those who perform these worships with proper rituals enjoy worldly comforts lifelong and attain abode of Lord Vishnu.

18.18 Flagging in the Temple of Lord Vishnu

Sanatkumar says: "O Narad! Now I am narrating about the flagging fast in order to please Lord Vishnu. He who performs this fast is even worshipped by Brahma and other deities. This fast accords virtues equal to those of donating one thousand carats of gold to a Brahmin or those attained taking bath in the Ganges and worshipping Shivalinga and basil sapling. " The devotee should observe this fast on the tenth day of the brighter phase in the month of Kartik. He should worship Shri Hari since morning after taking bath and wearing fresh clothes. He is expected to sleep before the idol that day. Next day, he should again perform worship, recite Nandishraaddh along with four Brahmins and bathe masts of the two flags. He should then worship the Sun, the Moon and Garud.

Then turmeric, sandalwood paste are smeared on the masts and white flowers are offered on them. Thereafter, the devotee must smear just enough ground with cow dung and produce a fire in an altar. One hundred and eight oblations are made with kheer in this fire. Havan thus performed is directed to Lord Vishnu, Brahma and Lakshmi then eight oblations are offered reciting -

VENTEYAAY SWAHA.

It is followed by oblations offered to the Sun, the Moon and Kaamadhenu.

The night is passed in worship and performing Havans. Next morning, the same rituals are performed to worship Lord Vishnu. At last, the flags are carried to a temple of Lord Vishnu and installed at the pinnacle or on top of a column. Lord Vishnu is worshipped with proper rituals. Circumambulating the temple, one should then present Brahmins with clothes and Dakshina, feed them and should take food after all. It is said that as long as the flag flutters in air, as much sins of the devotee are destroyed and he attains the abode of Lord Vishnu.

18.19 Tale of King Sumit's Previous Birth

Narad says: "O Sanatkumar! A king Sumit had performed this flagging fast for the first time. Kindly narrate to me the tale of his life."

Sanatkumar says: During Satayuga, a Somavanshi king Sumit was ruling the entire earth. He was very religious in nature and a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. He served the other devotees with respect and was a down to earth person.

His queen Satyamati was also a chaste woman. Both of them were the great worshippers of Shri Hari and knew everything about their previous birth. They regularly donated cereals and water. Satyamati used to dance in the temple of Lord Vishnu with pure feelings. The king also would install a big and beautiful flag in the temple on the twelfth day of brighter phase of every month. Their reputation had reached all the three worlds. One day, a sage Vibhaandak came to visit the king along with his disciples. The king and the queen treated the sage with respect and the king himself seated on a lower seat before the sage.

The king says: "I am salved O sage! Now order me how can I serve you?"

The sage says: "O king! I am very much pleased with you. Now I will ask you a few questions. Answer them honestly. You regularly install a big and beautiful flag in the temple of Lord Vishnu whereas there are many more rituals to please Him. Tell me the reason for your actions."

The king says: "O sage! I tell the reason for my action. Kindly listen to it. In the previous birth, I was a Shudra named Maalini and always engaged in appalling activities. One day, I abandoned my family and society and migrated to the

forest where I sustained myself on deer's flesh. But there too, I used to rob the passersby. One day, I had nothing to eat nor could I lay my hand on any passerby. Scorching sun of the summer was adding to my woe moreover. Thus perplexed by the thirst, hunger and intense heat, I was roaming in the forest when all of a sudden I stumbled upon a temple of Lord Vishnu. It had long been deserted and was very much in dilapidated condition. A small lake was also there beside the temple. In the lake, beautiful birds like swan and ducks were playing and delicious fruits and scented flowers also abounded in the forest. Since I was feeling tired to the point of dropping down, I ate the fruits which had fallen on the ground. Then I took rest at the bank of the lake.

Since that day, I began to live in that temple. There I repaired the walls, cleaned the premises and erected a small hut for myself. But still, I used to hunt small animals to satisfy my hunger. Twenty years passed like that. One day, a Saadhvi (a female hermit) named Avakokila, who hailed from a Nishaad family in Vindhyaachal, came there. Her family members had deserted her because of sinister actions she was involved in. She was thin and lean due to continuous starvation. Feeling pity on her, I gave her some fruits and flesh to eat. When she recovered, she narrated her tale that I am narrating to you as it was."

Saadhvi says: "I was born in the family of oarsman, Daaruk was my father. I was a great backbiter, thief and sinner. My family therefore deserted me. For sometime, my husband fostered me but he too died. Since then, I have been wandering from this place to that and it is because of Lord's grace that I have arrived here."

The king says: "Listening to her tale, I married her and we began to live in the temple. Every day we used to eat flesh and fruit. One day, under the intoxication of wine, we enjoyed our time greatly. We even began to dance forgetting our physical condition. Suddenly, agents of Yama arrived there and began to tighten their noose around us. Simultaneously, Shri Hari too sent His agents."

Vishnu's agents say: "O imprudent Yamadoots! Release this great devotee of Lord Vishnu.

Yamadoots say: "These are abject sinners. We will definitely take them with us."

These words infuriated the agents of Vishnu.

Vishnu's agents say: "They are not sinners. They are great devotees and the servers of Lord Vishnu. This woman has performed a dance while this man has installed a flag in the temple. Thus, their sins have been destroyed and they have now a right to the supreme abode. They have served this temple for the past thirty-two years."

Saying this, the agents of Vishnu snapped the noose and carried us to the abode

of Vishnu in a divine aircraft. Hearing this tale from the king Sumit, sage Vibhaandak felt extreme joy and went to the forest.

18.20 Description of HariPanchaRatra Vrata

Sanatkumar says: O Narad! I am now narrating about another fast. It is Haripanchak fast and is rare in all the worlds. It destroys all the sorrows of the devotee, fulfills his all desires and helps him attain the four goals of life. It is observed for five days in the month of Maargsheersh starting from the tenth day of the brighter phase till the full Moon day. On the first day, a day long fast is observed after worshipping Lord Vishnu in the morning. It is broken with a plain meal in the evening.

Next day, Lord's idol is bathed with milk containing ghee, curd, honey and five types of dry fruits followed by usual worship. Vows of the fast are recited and prayers are made for their successful completion. That whole night and also the subsequent nights till full Moon night are passed reciting Lord's name and singing devotional songs. Bathing of Lord's idol with milk containing ghee, curd, honey and dry fruits continues in the morning everyday till full Moon day.

On the full Moon day, Havan is performed with oblations of sesame seeds and donations. On the sixth day, the devotee must drink Panchgavya and worship Shri Hari, feed Brahmins and only then should take meal silently. This fast is observed every month till Kartik and closing rituals are taken up in the month of Maargsheersh next year. During the closing rituals, the devotee should observe day long fast on the eleventh day and take only Panchgavya on the twelfth day. Thereafter he should worship Lord Vishnu, donate honey, ghee, fruits, kheer and an urn filled with water and containing five jewels to the Brahmin. He should then feed the Brahmins before himself taking any meal.

O Narad! Those who observe this Haripanchak fast never return from Brahmaloka. Those who desire for salvation should essentially observe this fast. It destroys all the sins like a fire destroys a forest. Its virtues are equal to those of donating millions of cows.

18.21 Description of the Fruits of the Fast

Sanatkumar says:"Now I am narrating about an excellent fast for the benefit of the world. Listen to it carefully O Narad! This fast must be observed in the months of Ashaadh, Shraavan, Bhaadrapad or Ashwin. On any day during the brighter phase of these months, the devotees must drink Panchgavya and pass his time in the vicinity of Lord Vishnu's idol. Then, reciting scriptures in the guidance of learned Brahmins, he should take a vow to observe a month long fast praying Lord Vishnu to protect him from any unforeseen crises. The devotee should since then pass his time in a temple for one month. Everyday, he should bathe the idol with milk containing ghee, curd, honey and dry fruits and light the lamps before the idol. He is also expected to pass his life in a natural way

without using any artificial thing like toothpaste or soap. Then he should feed a Brahmin and give them Dakshina.

According to the provision of fast, the devotee should feed at least twelve Brahmins and donate jewelry. Virtues of this fast are enormous. A widow woman who has no son, ascetic, bachelor and Vanaprasthi should essentially observe this fast.

18.22 Tale of Bhadrasheel Brahmin

Sanatkumar says: "O Narad! A fast on Ekadashi (eleventh day) in both the phases of a month pleases Shri Hari and fulfills all the desires. On the eleventh day of each phase, one should not dine. Those who dine on the eleventh day commit severe sins. Salvation from sins like killing a Brahmin is possible but there is no method to eliminate the sins incurred because of dining on the eleventh day. Brahmins should essentially observe fast on the eleventh day of each phase. The preparations for Ekadashi Vrata start on the tenth day. The devotee should worship Shri Hari in the morning with proper rituals and pass the night in the vicinity of the idol."

On the eleventh day, the devotee should worship Shri Hari in the morning and take an oath to observe fast during the day and pray the Lord to protect him from calamities. The devotee must pass the night singing devotional songs, reciting scriptures and if possible dancing. In the morning of the twelfth day, he should worship Lord Vishnu as usual. Then he should feed Brahmins and make donations as per his powers. Performing five kinds of Yagyas, the devotee should break his fast in the last. During the period of fast, the devotee must not see wretched ones and desist from talking to such people who oppose Brahmins.

As there is no pilgrimage place holier than the Ganges; no teacher greater than the Mother and no deity more virtuous than Lord Vishnu. Similarly there is no fast greater than Ekadashi Vrata is. O Narad! I am now narrating an old tale. Listen to it carefully.

In the ancient times, a great sage Gaalav lived in the dense forest on the bank of the river Narmada. He was very peace loving and truth abiding in nature. The forest surrounding his hermitage was the playground for beautiful fauna, Yakshas, Gandharvas and Vidhyaadhars. Sage Gaalav passed his time engaged in penance. Thus, he lived there for a long time. He had an equally virtuous son named Bhadrasheel who was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and who knew everything about his previous birth. In his childhood, Bhadrasheel used to play with his friends but his plays reflected his religious sentiments. He would make an earthen idol of Lord Vishnu and worship it. He also would tell his friends to always worship Lord Vishnu and observe fast on the eleventh day of every phase in every month. His friends too followed him. During the worship, Bhadrasheel used to wish well for the entire world. His activities pleased the sage Gaalav

very much.

Gaalav says: "O fortunate one! You are really Bhadrasheel because even the Yogis rarely have a nature like yours. You always indulge in worship of Hari, benefit of all and observe fast on Ekadashi. You always abstain from forbidden work. How come, you acquired such a peaceful and unconflicting mind. I am very much pleased with you. Kindly tell me, about your achievements."

Bhadrasheel says: "O father! I have some remembrance of my previous birth. During my previous birth, Yama had preached me about religion." These words surprised Gaalav. He says: "O fortunate one! Who were you in your previous birth? What did Yamaraaj said to you and why?"

Bhadrasheel says: "O great sage! I was a king in Soma dynasty. I had received knowledge from Dharmakeerti and Dattatreya. I ruled continuously for thousand years. During this period, I committed various religious as well as irreligious tasks. In the company of imposters, I too became an imposter. Working diplomatically, I destroyed Yagyas. My subjects also followed me and began to behave irreligiously. I received sixth part of their evil deeds. One day, I went to the forest hunting. There, I killed many animals.

After a while, perplexed by thirst and hunger, I reached the bank of Narmada. I had strayed into deeper forests all alone. The intense sun was scorching my body. I was about to drop down because of hunger when I saw that people on the bank of Narmada were observing Ekadashi Vrata. I joined them and stayed awake all along the night without taking any food. But I could not bear the starvation and exertion and died as a result. Fierce looking Yamadoots took me to Yamaraaj. Yamaraaj asked Chitragupt to open the account of my life. Chitragupt thought for a moment and said: "Its true O Yamaraaj that this person is a sinner. But now he is free from his sins due to observing fast on Ekadashi and passing his night in the company of pious devotees." Hearing these words, Yamaraaj greeted me and worshipped me with devotion. Then, he called his servers."

Yamaraaj says: "Listen to me, O agents! I am narrating something to your interest. Never bring to me in future anybody who is engaged in religious task. Stay away from those who always recite the name of Shri Hari. Greet them from a distance. This is my order as well as teaching to all of you. Spare all those who serve their teachers, love their religion, are helpless, serve the pious one and are truly deserving. Bring all such people who abuse their mother, hate the world, steal the wealth of temples and Brahmins, who are killers, who do not observe fast on Ekadashi, who are short tempered, criticize me and nurture hostility with others."

Hearing such words from Yamaraaj, fire of penance began to burn within me. More intense this fire grew, more of my sins were destroyed. I acquired an appearance of Shri Hari. Even, Yamaraaj greeted me with respect. His action

even surprised the Yamadoots. Worshipping me, Yamaraaj sent me on a divine aircraft to the abode of Vishnu.

O father! I was passing my time happily. I did not know how and when crores of years passed. Then I arrived in Indraloka. There I stayed with the gods for many Kalpas. It was after such a great experience that I have arrived on the earth. Having the knowledge of my previous birth, I always engaged in the worship of Hari and inspire others to follow suit. Earlier, I didn't know the virtues of Ekadashi Vrata. But now, because of the knowledge of my previous births, I have come to know about it. I observed it without any desire and without knowing that I was actually observing a fast and received so much in return. Hence, I cannot tell how much will one receive if he observes Ekadashi Vrata with some desire. Those who devotedly worship Shri Hari and observe Ekadashi Vrata attain even the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu."

The words of his son gladdened sage Gaalav. He says- "My birth has been successful because I got such a devotee son like you who told me the complete method of worshipping Lord Vishnu."

19 Sanatkumar Purana (Upa-Purana 1)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

19.1Chapter

text

19.1.1 Section

text

20 Narasimha Purana (Upa-Purana 2)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

20.1Chapter

text

20.1.1 Section

text

21 Brihannaradiya Purana (Upa-Purana 3)

<WORK IN PROGRESS...>

This Purana consists of xx chapters:

21.1 Chapter

text

21.1.1 Section

text

22 Sivarahasya Purana (Upa-Purana 4)

<WORK IN PROGRESS...>

This Purana consists of xx chapters:

22.1 Chapter

text

22.1.1 Section

text

23 Durvasa Purana (Upa-Purana 5)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

23.1 Chapter

text

23.1.1 Section

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24 Kapila Purana (Upa-Purana 6)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

24.1 Chapter

text

24.1.1 Section

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25 Vamana Purana (Upa-Purana 7)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

25.1 Chapter

text

25.1.1 Section

text

26 Bhargava Purana (Upa-Purana 8)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

26.1Chapter

text

26.1.1 Section

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27 Varuna Purana (Upa-Purana 9)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

27.1Chapter

text

27.1.1 Section

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28 Kalika Purana (Upa-Purana 10)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

28.1 Chapter

text

28.1.1 Section

text

29 Samba Purana (Upa-Purana 11)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

29.1 Chapter

text

29.1.1 Section

text

30 Nandi Purana (Upa-Purana 12)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

30.1 Chapter

text

30.1.1 Section

text

31 Surya Purana (Upa-Purana 13)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

31.1Chapter

text

31.1.1 Section

text

32 Parasara Purana (Upa-Purana 14)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

32.1Chapter

text

32.1.1 Section

text

33 Vasishtha Purana (Upa-Purana 15)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

33.1Chapter

text

33.1.1 Section

text

34 Devi-Bhagavata Purana (Upa-Purana 16)

<WORK IN PROGRESS…>

This Purana consists of xx chapters:

34.1Chapter

text

34.1.1 Section

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35 Ganesha Purana (Upa-Purana 17)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

35.1Chapter

text

35.1.1 Section

text

36 Hamsa Purana (Upa-Purana 18)

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This Purana consists of xx chapters:

36.1Chapter

text

36.1.1 Section

text